THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE

ELLERY QUEEN

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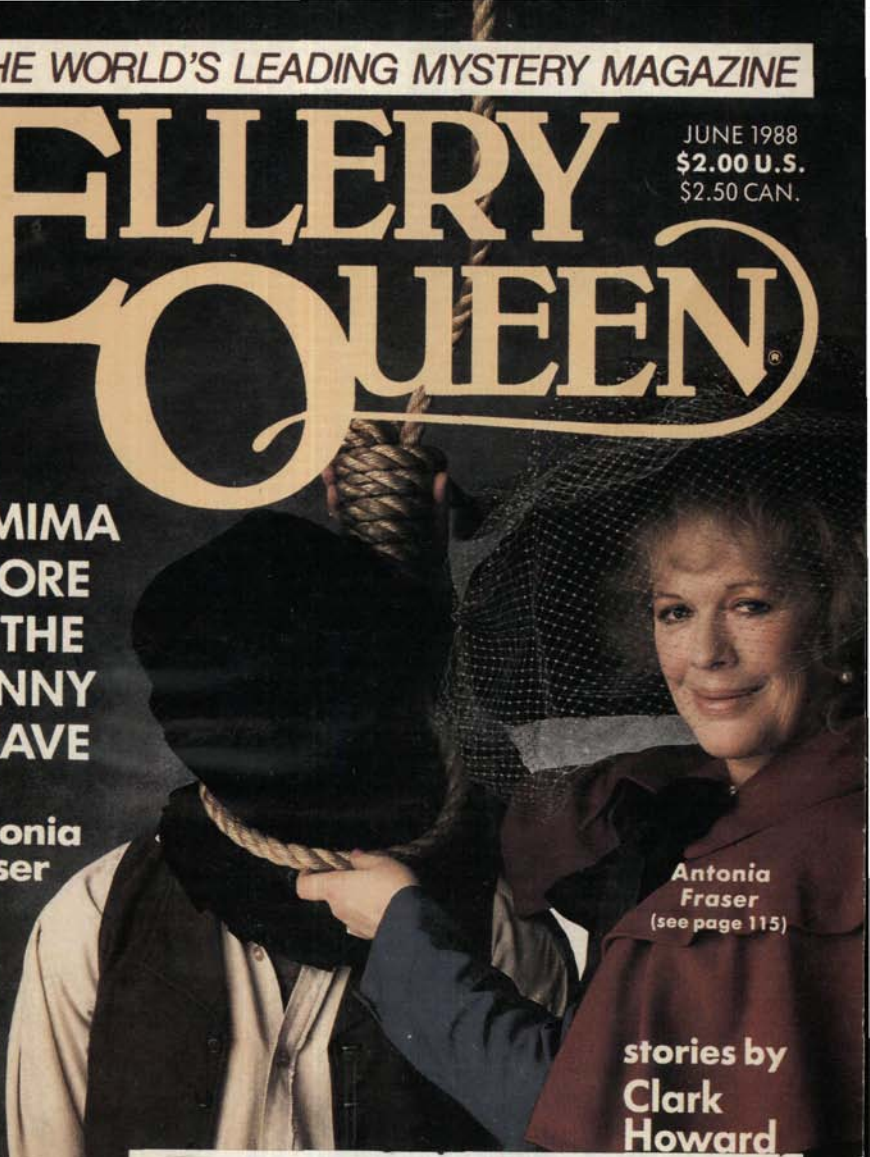
JEMIMA SHORE AT THE SUNNY GRAVE

by Antonia Fraser



Antonia Fraser
(see page 115)

stories by Clark Howard

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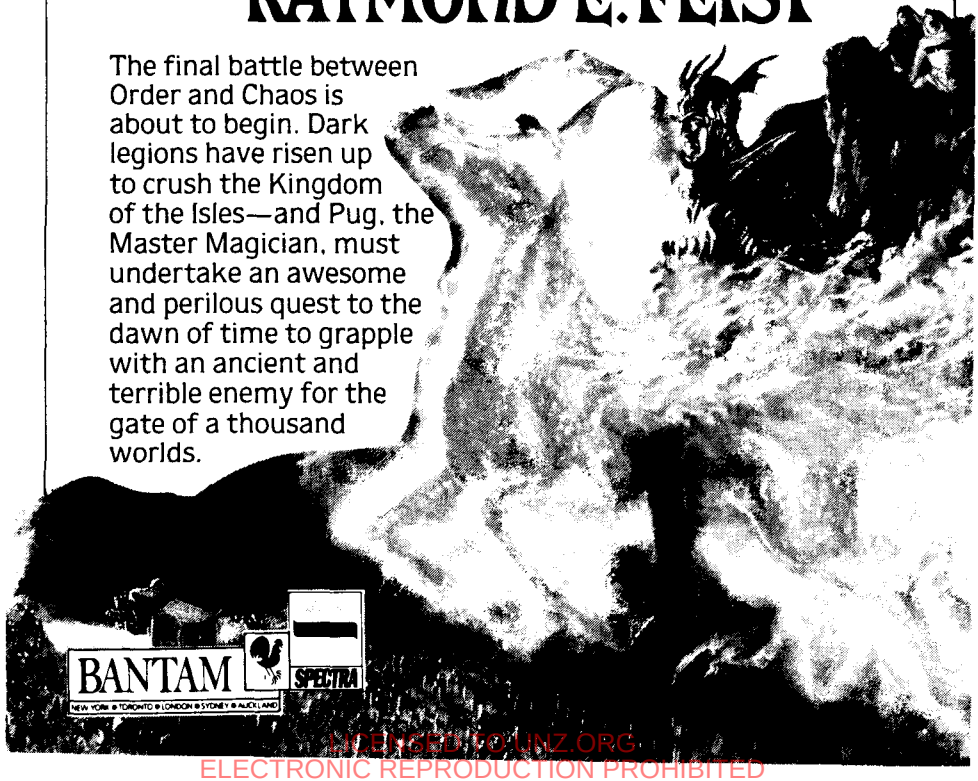

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On our cover is
ANTONIA FRASER

Photograph by Peter Papadopolous

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Note: indicia on page 159

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a *NEW* short story by

CLARK HOWARD

The event we've looked for so eagerly for many months—a new story by your favorite Clark Howard, a story with all the sensitivity and substance we've learned to expect from this remarkable writer.

The faces in the photos were all very young—Chief Charlie, Billy, Odell, Joe. In one photo they were smiling, in another they were trying to look badass Marine. There was also a photograph of them with Lieutenant Russo, the platoon leader, and Colonel Lightman, the commanding officer. Billy had drawn a circle around Lightman's face with orange crayon . . .

THE COLOR OF DEATH

by CLARK HOWARD

When the phone rang at four o'clock in the morning, Joe Page knew instinctively that it was Billy calling. He couldn't have explained how he knew—he just knew. The first several rings of the phone started bringing Joe's mind up from the Quaalude nest in which it rested, the next several rings generated movement in limbs that were wasted from his earlier sexual marathon with the woman with fuchsia hair lying next to him, and somewhere around the eighth or tenth ring he sat up on the side of the open sleeper sofa and picked up the receiver.

"Yeah, hello."

"Joe? Is that you, Joe? This here's Billy."

"Yeah, Billy—"

"Listen, Joe, you 'member those lumps I had on my legs last year? Those ones the doctor said was just fatty tumors that would prob'ly go away?"

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"The ones that did go away," Joe reminded him.

"Yeah, well, they're back," Billy said. A Tennessee twang made his voice go high-pitched sometimes, like when he was agitated. "When I woke up this morning, I had 'em on both legs again. And I can feel some startin' on my back."

Joe didn't say anything. He was trying to visualize Billy, trying to picture him on the Tennessee sharecropper farm, wearing overalls, sitting on a tractor in the sun, but the only image that came to mind was the other Billy—the Billy with a gun in his hand, the Billy who killed men.

"Joe? Did you hear me? I said—"

"I heard you, Billy. You'd better go back to the hospital."

"I don't like the hospital, Joe. They act like I'm some kind of a nuisance or something. Anyhow, they don't help me none."

"You have to go back," Joe said patiently. He massaged the back of his neck. The woman next to him stirred and expelled a heavy breath.

"Joe, I think Chief Charlie is dead," Billy said, changing the subject. "I ain't had a letter from him in two months. Only reason he'd quit writing me was if he died."

"Maybe he's on a drunk," Joe suggested. "Maybe he's in jail. You know how Indians are."

"He's dead, Joe. I can feel it."

"Okay, have it your way. Now what about the hospital? When can you go back?"

"Will you come and go with me, Joe?" Billy asked. "That time you went with me they didn't treat me so bad."

"I can't, Billy. It's too far. Besides, I've got a new job."

"A new job? No bull. What kind of job?"

Joe thought fast. "I'm managing a string of parking lots. Couple of dozen lots. All over the L.A. area."

"No bull?" Billy's voice became excited. "Are any of 'em in Hollywood?"

"Yeah, two or three." The one at which he was a parking attendant was in Culver City, the pits.

"You ever see Ann-Margret?"

"Saw her just the other day."

"She look as gorgeous in person?"

"Better."

"No bull! Man!" Billy was silent for several moments. Then he

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said, "I guess you couldn't get a few days off and go to the hospital with me, then?"

"I don't think so. But I want you to promise me you'll go anyway."

"Oh, sure."

"Word of honor?"

"Sure, Joe. Listen, I gotta get out in the patch and tend my crop. I'll talk to you soon."

Billy hung up and Joe sat in the dark holding the receiver, thinking about the lumps on Billy's legs and back. He wondered why the people at the hospital didn't treat him any better. Goddamned doctors and nurses—coldest people in the world.

Hanging up the phone, Joe rose and moved a few feet across the room to a tiny kitchen set behind a breakfast bar. Turning on a light over the sink, he ran cold water and washed his face, then drank some of it from cupped hands to irrigate the desert inside his mouth caused by the Quaalude. Why were those lumps coming back on Billy's legs, he wondered. And why had Chief Charlie stopped writing to Billy? Could Billy be right—was the Chief dead?

A slant of light from the kitchen alcove fell across the woman on the sofa. She was breathing noisily now through her open mouth and there were bubbles of spittle collecting in one corner of her lips. What the hell was her name, anyway? She had parked her Corvette on his lot that afternoon, they had talked, and she had picked him up at nine when he closed. Between the fuchsia hair, purple lips, those breasts, and the 'ludes, he had made it through another night. Another night that would become meaningless in a week, forgotten in a month. Or perhaps it was already meaningless. If a man couldn't even remember a woman's name—

Billy was scared, Joe realized, interrupting his own train of thought. Joe recognized the fear in the Tennessean's voice. He had heard it before. Like everybody else, Billy feared the things he couldn't understand—the lumps that had returned on his body, the cessation of letters from Chief Charlie.

He won't go back to the hospital, Joe decided. Billy's sour southern pride wouldn't let him go back to a place where he thought he was considered a nuisance. Unless somebody went with him for support.

Joe walked back to the telephone and held the handset toward the light to dial, wondering if Billy had left the house yet. But Billy answered on the first ring and Joe thought, He was sitting there waiting for me to call.

"Listen, I can probably take a few days off."

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"You gonna be driving back?" Billy asked.

"Yeah."

"Could you stop off and see what's the matter with the Chief? It won't be out of your way."

"Okay." Joe shook his head resignedly. Billy had taken it for granted that he would call, taken it for granted that he'd find out about Chief Charlie for him. In Billy's mind, Joe was still the leader. A follower had a right to take his leader for granted.

After he hung up the second time, Joe looked at the clock and calculated that there were a couple of hours before the morning rush began. Might as well get out of town ahead of the traffic, he decided. Ever since he got back from Vietnam, he realized, he had been getting out of town ahead of *something:* creditors, irate husbands, bench warrants. Lately he'd developed the habit of never looking back, in case somebody was gaining on him.

Quietly, so as not to wake the woman, Joe Page began packing.

Heat rose from the Arizona highway in shimmering waves, and just outside Casa Grande a rattlesnake slithered across the asphalt in front of Joe's car. Joe slowed down to let it get across his side, but in the rearview mirror saw a pickup truck swerve into the oncoming lane to run over it. Bastard, Joe thought. For the next few miles he entertained violent thoughts about the driver of the pickup.

A gravel road led from the state highway out to the Pima reservation. The reservation settlement was an accumulation of faded surplus government structures, mostly pre-fab Quonset huts with rusted corrugated roofs and porches that had tilted with the shifting of the desert. The only sign of life was a trio of Pima men in old jeans and T-shirts, sitting in the shade of a two-pump gas station playing cards on an upturned Valvoline carton. A thermometer nearby, also in the shade, registered one hundred eight. Joe recalled Chief Charlie telling him that this was a place, the older Pimas believed, that long ago became so hot that the trees melted and formed cactus.

Parking, Joe let the dust settle before getting out of the car, then went up three wooden steps to a Quonset with a sign on the outside that read: TRIBAL OFFICES. At a badly scarred desk inside sat a Pima man of perhaps forty wearing a plaid shirt and a belt with a large silver buckle. He had a pot belly and thick hips from too much sitting. On the desk in front of him was an open Dr. Pepper and a

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skin magazine; behind him on a table was a small black-and-white television turned to a game show he wasn't watching.

"What you need?" he asked when Joe entered.

"I'm looking for Charles Long," Joe said. "I think he lives somewhere on the reservation."

"What you want him for?"

The curtness of the question rankled Joe but he didn't show it. "I'm a friend of his. I was driving through and thought—"

"Charlie Long's dead, man." The Indian said it without emotion, like he would say your battery was dead. "His old man and sister live a few miles down the road if you want to see them. It's a house on the left with an old Studebaker up on blocks out in front. You can't miss it." As Joe turned to leave, the man was suddenly inspired to ask, "Say, you don't happen to know if he had insurance of any kind, do you? Half of it's supposed to go to the tribal council if he had any. His old man said there wasn't none, but he could be lying."

"I wouldn't know about any insurance," Joe replied evenly, and left.

Outside, Joe quickly decided not to visit Chief Charlie's father and sister. No point to it, he thought. He had found out what he came to find out: the Chief was dead, just as Billy suspected. The important thing now was to get to Tennessee and take Billy back to the hospital.

In the car, Joe checked his roadmap and found that he could continue through the reservation and connect with the Interstate on the other side without doubling back. Driving away from the tribal office, he tried to visualize Charlie here on the Pima reservation, wearing old jeans and a T-shirt, playing cards in the shade at the two-pump gas station. But the only image that came to mind was the other Charlie—the Charlie with a gun in his hand, the Charlie who killed men. Why, he wondered, could he never think of Billy or Charlie as the way they had become, instead of the way they had been. Odell Sampson, a black man from Chicago who had been the fourth member of their team, had once told them it wouldn't matter that they stopped killing—they would still be killers. "Once you lose that cherry, baby, you never a virgin again," Odell had said. "A killer *always* be a killer." Maybe, Joe mused, Odell had been right. Whenever Joe saw Billy or Chief Charlie or even Odell in his mind, it was always with a gun in their hands. Joe avoided thinking about himself.

A couple of miles farther along, Joe came to the reservation cem-

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etery. On impulse he pulled off the road and parked. Without knowing why, he wanted to see Charlie's grave. Randomly, he began prowling the parched lanes between rows of bleached headstones and grave markers. The brutal midafternoon sun at once became scorching on the scalp under his thinning hair, and on his nose where he always sunburned first. He had no hat of any kind and common sense told him he should get back in the car out of the sun, but for some indefinable reason he kept going, he *had* to see the grave. Like a specter he continued to walk, his eyes flicking from dead name to dead name.

Suddenly his eyes stopped and held. Not on Charlie's grave but on another. A name from the past. The marker read: IRA HAMILTON HAYES. Joe stared at the name. Ira Hayes was the Pima Indian who had been one of five Marines who planted the United States flag atop Mt. Suribachi on Iwo Jima. The photograph of it had become famous and the men and their act were forever preserved life-size in a bronze statue in Washington, D.C. Ira Hayes had returned to the barren land of his tribe a national figure, and died there an alcoholic, unable to help his people secure irrigation for their parched land, unable to cope with his own hollow fame—hero to the Pima, redskinned nigger to Arizona whites—and ultimately unable to help even himself as the liquor took more and more control. One night he had fallen to the ground with his face in a puddle of rare rainwater and drowned in the middle of the desert. Chief Charlie had told the story to Joe and the others. They had all been quietly moved by it.

Joe walked on, up and down the rows, for another ten minutes. At one point he was surprised to find a young Pima girl, perhaps fourteen, sitting in the shade of one of the taller gravestones. She had waist-length hair, black and shiny as a crow's wing, and eyes like perfect bullet holes. Her jeans were cut off at mid-thigh and the simple white blouse she wore was sleeveless. Her bare feet were dusty up to the ankle. She watched Joe but said nothing to him. Without speaking to her, he continued on his way.

In the very next row, Joe found Charlie's grave. A simple square marker at its head gave his name, Charles Edward Long, the tribe, Casa Grande Pima, and the dates of his birth and death. Joe stood looking at the grave, aware that the young Pima girl was watching him. But for her presence, he would have said something to Charlie—nothing philosophical or sage, nothing heavy, just "So long, it's been good to know you" or something like that. But with the girl

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within hearing he was too self-conscious, so he simply thought his words, then turned to leave.

"Why did you stop at my brother's grave?" the Pima girl asked. Her words seemed very loud in the hot silence of the place. Joe stopped and turned to her.

"He was a friend." He studied her dark, angular features, seeing nothing of Charlie in her face. Her name, he remembered Charlie saying, was Luz.

"Are you Billy?" she asked eagerly.

"No. I'm Joe Page."

"Oh. You were the leader."

Joe nodded. "Yes."

The girl looked wistfully at Charlie's grave. "I thought maybe you were Billy. When Charles died, I wanted to write and tell Billy about it, but my father wouldn't let me. He said if Billy was a true friend to Charles he would come here to see why Charles stopped writing."

"Billy's sick again," Joe explained. "He has to go back to the hospital."

"Oh." She rose and came over to Joe, her height surprising him. She was all legs and arms, elbows and knees. "Charles went to the hospital before he died, but they said they couldn't do anything for him."

"What was the matter with him?" Joe asked.

The girl shrugged. "Nobody knows. He had funny lumps all over his body."

Joe drove the rest of the way to Tennessee as if he was in an endurance race. Across New Mexico, the Texas panhandle, Oklahoma, and Arkansas—filling up with gas, buying vending-machine food, and using the rest room all at one station, other than that stopping only when clawing sleep made further driving too dangerous, in which case he simply pulled off the road wherever he was and slept for an hour, two at the most. It was seven in the morning when he drove around the town square of Ripley, Tennessee, and asked at the Blue Star Cafe how to find the farm Billy worked.

It was sixteen miles down in the bottom land along a tributary of the Mississippi. Rich cotton land. When Joe got there, he found a wide field of healthy stalks budding with bolls already splitting to expose their fluffy white treasure. A frame shack was set in the middle of the field and Billy, in bib overalls, sat in a rocker on the porch, waiting for him.

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"Chief's dead, ain't he?" Billy asked without preliminary when Joe got out of the car. Joe nodded without speaking and stepped up onto the porch. Billy rose and the two men embraced. They held each other as brothers might, their affection deep and genuine.

"How do you feel?" Joe asked when they separated.

"Not too hot," Billy admitted. He was a lanky man with a perpetual stoop. "I been having some—what do you call it? When you feel sick?"

"Nausea."

"Yeah. I been having some nausea."

"Why don't you get ready," Joe suggested, "and we'll leave for the hospital right away?"

"Don't you want to get some rest? You look thrashed, man."

"I'm okay. Let's leave now."

Billy shrugged. "If you say so." Joe was still the leader.

Billy changed into a pair of khakis and a sport shirt, threw some extra things into a suitcase, and they started off. The hospital was a hundred and fifty miles away, a three-hour drive. Halfway there, they pulled into a truck stop for breakfast. In a booth by the window, they asked the waitress for two orders of sausage and scrambled eggs.

"Two Number Fours," she said and walked away.

Joe watched Billy shift around trying to get comfortable. "Do the lumps hurt?" he asked.

Billy shook his head. "They ain't got no feeling in 'em at all. Just feels funny to lean back on them. Gushy, like."

The waitress returned and set two glasses of orange juice on the table. Billy's expression darkened. "We didn't order that, Miss."

"It comes with the Number Four."

"I don't care what it comes with, we don't want it."

"There's no extra charge—"

Billy glared at her. "You understand English? *We don't want it!*"

The waitress's lips compressed. "Well, there's no need to get nasty about it."

The fry cook came out of the kitchen. He had muscular arms and tattoos. "What's the problem, Thelma?"

"Some people just don't know the meaning of the word courtesy," Thelma said tightly.

"Go to hell, both of you," Billy told them. He got up and walked away from the booth. The fry cook scowled and looked like he might go after him, so Joe rose and blocked his way.

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"He's sick, mister. He didn't mean anything by it. Here—" He gave the fry cook ten dollars for the breakfasts and the waitress five for her hurt feelings.

Back in the car, Billy said, "I'm sorry, Joe. I just couldn't look at that juice. It's the color of death."

"I know," Joe said. "It's okay."

At the hospital, they put Billy through six hours of tests: X-rays, blood study, urinalysis, cardiogram, hearing and vision tests, even a sperm count—which Billy first balked at but finally consented to. They also did biopsies of minute plugs taken from the fatty lumps on his back and legs. When it was all over, the doctor told Billy the same thing he had told him three times before.

"The lumps are just fatty tissue. There's no carcinoma, no blood infection, no indication whatever that they're affecting any critical function of your body. And certainly nothing to lead us to believe that Agent Orange was in any way a causal factor."

Billy looked down at his hands, folded in his lap. Joe, sitting next to him, asked, "What about the nausea? And the friend of ours who died in Arizona with lumps on his body, too?"

"Nausea," the doctor said, "can be caused by dozens of conditions. Too much sugar, not enough sugar, too much salt, not enough salt." He waved a hand peremptorily. "Even too much sex or not enough sex. As for your friend in Arizona, I couldn't comment on his death without first studying his medical record. But I know this: if his condition had been positively linked to Agent Orange, this hospital would have been advised."

"Unless the government wanted to cover it up," Joe said.

The doctor fixed him in a cool stare. "Are you a relative of this patient," he asked pointedly, "or his attorney or what?"

"I'm the man," Joe replied evenly, "who led him and the others into the strip of jungle that had been defoliated. I was his fire-team leader."

The doctor sighed quietly and put aside his irritation. "Look, men, I'm not trying to handle you or con you. If there was medical proof that Agent Orange was at fault, I'd be the first one to certify not only treatment but a disability pension as well. But there's simply nothing to back up such a claim. We wouldn't know how to treat you, anyway, other than to surgically remove the lumps. Hell, we don't even know what's causing them. Maybe it was the Marine Corps chow, or the Thai pot and hash and other stuff you guys

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smoked over there, or maybe the other side was engaging in some kind of chemical warfare we don't know about. Some men—" he pointed at Joe "—haven't been affected at all."

He spread his hands helplessly. "Agent Orange was a mixture of two defoliants, one of which contained a chemical called dioxine. It's been tested extensively and shown to have numerous adverse effects on laboratory animals—lymphomas, gastritis, impotence, liver failure—but it has never been proven harmful to humans. The only medically proven condition definitely associated with human exposure to dioxine is chloracne, a skin rash. Human tissue simply doesn't retain the chemical long enough for it to do more serious damage."

Billy stared at the doctor for a moment, then grunted softly as if he had been stupid to have expected anything better and walked out of the office. Rising to follow him, Joe paused long enough to say, "The bottom line for Billy is still no medical treatment, no disability, no nothing—is that it?"

"For the present time, I'm afraid so," the doctor confirmed. "At some time in the future—"

"He doesn't *have* a future," Joe interrupted. "Can't you see that? He's dying right now."

As Joe left, the doctor wanted to say how sorry he was. But he couldn't muster the words.

Outside in the car, Billy stared solemnly at the dashboard and said, "Somebody's to blame for this, Joe. Somebody ought to pay."

Now it was Joe who grunted softly. "Who?" he asked.

Billy shrugged. "I don't know. Somebody."

"There's nobody," Joe asserted. "The President that sent us over there is dead. I don't even remember who the Secretary of Defense was, or the Secretary of State, but they were just advisors, anyway. And we can't go after all the politicians that let the war go on for so long. Or the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Or the commandant of the Marine Corps. Or the admiral who ordered the stuff sprayed."

"What about Lightman?" Billy asked.

"The colonel?"

"He's the one sent us into it," Billy reminded him. "We could've gone around the strip that they sprayed. Lieutenant Russo asked permission to send us the long way around."

"We didn't have enough time," Joe said. "We had to check out that village before the main force moved up, in case it was mined."

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"Another day wouldn't have made no difference," Billy argued. "Lightman just wouldn't have looked as good to the top brass."

Joe frowned, remembering Colonel Ralph Lightman, the martinet Marine officer who had been in charge of their unit. "Lightning" Lightman, they called him. He wore pearl-handled pistols and carried a swagger stick with a Japanese bullet on its tip that had been pulled out of his shoulder on Saipan. The top brass always gave him the dirty jobs to do because they knew he could get his men to do them. Most Marines in his Force Recon group would have gone to hell for him. Maybe some even did, Joe mused. A living hell like Chief Charlie had gone through, like Billy was going through now.

"Another day wouldn't have made no difference," Billy repeated doggedly. " 'Cept to us." He stared starkly at Joe. "He ought to have to pay."

Joe's frown deepened and he said quietly, "I'm not sure, Billy. I'm just not sure."

"Let's make sure, then." Billy took a roadmap out of the glove compartment and unfolded it. Studying it, he said, "Looks like about six hundred miles to Chicago."

Joe nodded. "Think you can drive?" he asked.

Billy shook his head. "I don't think so, Joe. I'm feeling worse all the time. Kind of dizzylike."

"Lie down in the back seat. Maybe you can sleep."

Billy got into the back seat. "Don't let me die by myself, Joe."

"I won't," Joe promised.

The trip north took fifteen hours, Joe again making only necessary multi-purpose stops for gas, food, and relief. It was nine o'clock in the morning when they drove slowly along a tenement block on Chicago's south side. Several unfriendly black faces paused on the sidewalk to look at them as they pulled to the curb and parked.

"We better hope he still lives here," Billy, his face haggard, said apprehensively. He was now riding up front with Joe. The hostile faces generated an inbred southern nervousness.

Joe glanced around. Half a dozen black men and women had come out onto nearby porches to stare at them. Windows had been raised and others leaned out to look. It was as if their color had reflected a signal of some kind that warned: Outsiders. Intruders. White men.

On the front steps of the building Joe and Billy were looking for, three sullen young men, all wearing red sweatbands, glared threat-

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eningly. As Joe and Billy got out of the car and started up the steps, one of them said, "You lost or what?"

"We're looking for someone," Joe said. "A man named Odell Sampson." He waited a long moment for some kind of response, but none was forthcoming. "Do you know Odell Sampson?"

Before the youth could answer, a nearby female voice said, "I know Odell Sampson." Joe and Billy turned to an open window on the first floor where they saw a woman of perhaps sixty with her head wrapped in a neatly tied blue bandanna. She had a strong, smoldering face and a defiantly raised chin. "What y'all want with Odell Sampson?"

The two white men went up to the porch close to the window. "We're friends of Odell's," Joe said.

The woman shook her head adamantly. "Odell ain't got no white friends."

"He used to have," Joe said. "In the Vietnam War. We were both his friends."

"Friends keep in touch," the woman said. "You been in touch with Odell?"

"No," Joe admitted. He was suddenly ashamed of himself for not staying in touch.

"If you'd kept in touch," the woman said accusingly, "you'd know Odell was gone." Her dark eyes turned wet. "Odell killed himself. My last born, my baby boy, went crazy and killed himself over those ugly lumps that growed all over him—"

Suddenly Billy staggered back and fell to his knees. Joe tried to catch him, but missed. None of the three youths moved to help.

"What's the matter with him?" the woman in the window asked.

"Same thing that was the matter with Odell," Joe told her.

The woman snapped her fingers at the three youths. "Y'all pick up that white boy and bring him in here," she ordered.

Billy lived through the day, but died that night. Joe and Odell's mother, Olive Sampson, sat with him during his final hours. Olive held his hand.

"I'm sorry I didn't keep writing to Odell," Billy said. "I tried writing to him, and he tried writing back, but we just didn't have nothing to say. Over in 'Nam we were good friends, *close* friends, 'cause we was both the same—both grunts, both trying to stay alive, both trying to make it through our tour and get back to the real world. Then when we did get back, we was different again. Odell was a big-

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city, northern black man and I'm a small-town, southern white man. We didn't have nothing to say to one another no more."

Olive Sampson nodded her head sadly. "I understand. I'm sure Odell did, too. Don't you fret about it."

Delirium came and went as Billy lay there. Once when he opened his eyes he looked at Joe and said, "One more day. What would it have mattered, Joe? The goddamned war wasn't going nowhere, was it? Was it, Joe?"

"No, Billy, it wasn't."

Another time Billy looked at Olive. "Once we stopped killing other men, me and Odell didn't have nothing in common no more. That's sad, ain't it?"

"Yes, son, that's sad," Olive agreed, tears in her eyes.

When Billy closed his eyes for the last time, Joe was alone in the room with him. Before he died, Billy clutched Joe's hand in desperation. "Make somebody pay, Joe," he pleaded. "For Chief Charlie and Odell and me."

Before Joe could answer, Billy was dead. Olive came back in and continued to cry. "This is the same bed where my baby Odell went to his final peace after he took all those awful pills they gave him."

"What pills? Who gave him?" Joe asked.

"Those folks at the veterans hospital. Odell kept going to see them, kept telling them there was something the matter with him from the war. They kept saying there wasn't nothing they could do for him, that there wasn't no proof the war caused all those lumps he had. When he got more and more of them, he started pestering them every day and they began giving him tranquilizers to keep him calm. Odell, he saved the pills up. We found five empty bottles on the sink."

Joe put his face in his hands.

Olive came around the bed and stroked his head. "Now, now. Don't you fret. Why, Billy and Odell are in a place where they can be friends again."

Joe started to cry a little. Then Billy's words came back to him. *Make somebody pay, Joe.* The memory dried Joe's tears.

Olive promised to take charge of Billy's funeral and see that the V.A. buried him in the veterans cemetery where Odell was buried.

Joe left Chicago, heading east. He drove until he was exhausted, then checked into a motel somewhere in Pennsylvania. He bought some takeout food and a bottle of gin, took a shower, turned on the

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television, ate, drank, turned off the television, and later, half drunk, went through Billy's suitcase. Besides the few clothes and a shave kit, Joe found Billy's service insurance policy for ten thousand dollars, with himself as the beneficiary. He also found a few snapshots of their fire team taken while they were still in Vietnam. The faces in the photos were all very young—Chief Charlie, Billy, Odell, himself. In one photo they were smiling, in another they were trying to look badass Marine. There was also a photograph of them with Lieutenant Russo, the platoon leader, and Colonel Lightman, the commanding officer. Billy had drawn a circle around Lightman's face with orange crayon.

In the bottom of the suitcase, Joe found Billy's pistol, a .45 Colt Billy had carried during his combat tour and stolen from the Marine Corps when he was discharged. It had walnut grips into which Billy, like a gunfighter of old, had carved a notch for every man he killed. Joe counted the notches. There were forty of them. Billy's body count had been the second highest in the fire team. As Joe held the weapon, Billy's words returned again. Make somebody pay. Joe slept that night with the gun and the picture of Lightman under his pillow.

The next morning before he checked out, he used a sheet of motel stationery to sign over Billy's insurance policy to Luz, Chief Charlie's sister. Joe had let his own service insurance policy lapse long ago, just, he thought, as he had let a lot of other things lapse: his pride, his self-respect, his guts.

But that was going to change now, he told himself, hefting Billy's pistol. One more notch was going to be carved on those walnut grips, one more number added to the fire team's body count.

Somebody was going to pay.

Joe drove on to Washington, D.C., and went to the records section at Marine Corps Headquarters. He showed his Reserve identification card to a pixieish woman Marine corporal. "Some of the guys from our outfit in 'Nam are organizing a reunion," he told her. "We thought it might be a nice touch to invite our old commanding officer." He shrugged good-naturedly. "He probably won't come—you know how officers are—but we'd like to send him an invitation, anyway, if we can find out where he's at. His name is Colonel Ralph Lightman."

The corporal worked some keys on a computer terminal. After a moment she said, "Okay, here he is. Maybe he *will* come to your

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reunion, Sergeant—he lives right over in Virginia. Retired two years ago." She wrote down an address.

"Thanks," Joe said, smiling. He put the address in his pocket next to the photo of Lightman with his face circled in orange crayon.

Traffic was heavy getting out of Washington and Joe didn't reach the little Virginia suburb until after dark. At the address he had been given, he found a two-story red-brick home set on a manicured lawn bordered by a horseshoe driveway. Parking down the road, he got Billy's pistol out of the glove compartment. He jacked a round into the chamber, carefully let the hammer back down, and put the gun on his hip under his belt, leaving his coat unbuttoned to avoid creating a bulge.

Leaving his car, he walked back to the drive, keeping in shadows, stepping quietly. He glanced around for observers, at the same time trying to generate some saliva in a mouth suddenly gone dry. It had been a long time since he stalked an enemy. He heard a dog bark and was relieved to realize it wasn't close. A light evening breeze brought with it a faint sound of soft music.

At the front door, Joe had to ring only once to get a response. The door was opened by a woman close to his own age, a plain woman without makeup, dressed in tweed slacks and an old sweater, her hair pulled back tight on her head. "Yes?" she asked, squinting at him in the porch light.

"Excuse me," Joe said. "Does Ralph Lightman live here?"

"Yes."

"Colonel Lightman?"

"Retired colonel, yes."

"I wonder if I could see him for a minute?" Joe asked. "I served under him in Vietnam. Some of us are organizing a reunion and we—"

"Please come in," the young woman said, opening the door wider. "I'm Regina Arnold, the colonel's daughter."

"Is the colonel at home?" Joe asked, entering the foyer.

"Yes, he is." She tilted her head curiously. "Your name is?"

Joe stared at her for a second. What the hell, he decided, he didn't really care whether he got caught or not. As a matter of fact, if he got caught he could tell the press why he'd done it. "Page," he answered. "Joe Page. I was a sergeant."

"And you're organizing a reunion?" The curiosity was edging toward suspicion.

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"Yes. A reunion."

She studied him for a moment, seeming to ponder, then said, "All right. Follow me, please."

She led him along a main-floor hallway to a pair of oak doors, where she knocked softly before opening one.

Joe followed her into the room. It was dark inside except for the glow of a large television in one corner. The sound emanating from the television was muted but instantly recognizable to Joe: small-arms fire, grenade concussions, mortar explosions. When his eyes came round to the screen, he saw news coverage of Vietnam combat action being shown from a video player. A figure sat hunched in front of the set. Joe's expression tightened. The old ghoul was reminiscing.

Slipping the automatic from under his coat, Joe held it next to his leg, thumb on the hammer, finger on the trigger. "Father," Regina Arnold said, "there's someone here to see you. A sergeant who served with you named Joe Page."

The hunched figure looked over his shoulder at the lighted doorway. "Another one?"

"I'm not sure," she said.

Joe saw a hand move and the television became silent, reducing its violent images to a dreamlike quality. The hand moved again and turned on a lamp, then the figure whirled around and moved forward and Joe saw that the chair was a wheelchair. Squinting in the new light, his eyes fell on the face of Ralph Lightman, the same face that Billy had circled in orange crayon. A face now covered with fatty lumps, as if it had been pushed into a hive and stung by a hundred bees. The hideous countenance looked up at Joe.

"How do you intend to do it, Sergeant? Bayonet? Pistol? Grenade?"

Joe glanced at Regina Arnold. She was staring fiercely at him. His mouth was dry again, but his palm next to the pistol grip was moist. Inside, he felt the once-familiar sensation called "combat guts"—the tickling, tingling feeling that first mushroomed in a man's stomach, then trickled into his legs, and finally backed up into his groin, like a reverse orgasm, weakening him the same way, suddenly, irreversibly. It took every nerve at his command just to swallow.

"Go ahead and do it," Lightman challenged. "I've been trying to get one of you to do it for a long time."

Make somebody pay, Joe.

Regina Arnold put a hand on Joe's arm. "Do it," she said. Joe

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locked eyes with hers. The woman's expression was intense and desperate, her face empty of color, ghostly. "Put him to rest, for God's sake—" Her voice broke and she looked away.

Make somebody pay.

Joe blinked rapidly several times, before shaking his head once in a quick jerk. Putting the gun back in his belt, he walked out of the room.

He was past the front door, crossing the drive, when she came running after him. "Wait, please! I didn't mean what I said in there. It's just that he's suffered for so long!"

Joe stopped and looked at her. The fierceness was gone from her eyes. There was something familiar, almost comfortable about her now, as if he'd known her plain face for a long time. "Listen, you don't have to go," she said. "There's a place for you here."

Joe said nothing.

"Come," she urged, taking his hand, "let me show you."

She led him back into the house and to another door that opened down a flight of stairs to the basement. There were no windows at that level, but it was brightly lighted by fluorescents. Joe looked incredulously at an arrangement of a dozen military bunkbeds, lockers, and shelves. Exactly like a barracks. Seven or eight men, some with visible fatty lumps, some without, were in the room, reading, playing cards, watching television. One man, at a desk, was typing on an old portable.

A greying, heavyset black man got up from a bunk where he had been reading, removed his eyeglasses, and asked, "Name and rank?"

"Page," Joe said, wetting his lips, "Sergeant."

"I'm Moses, Master Sergeant," the other man said. "Put your weapon over there."

Looking where Moses indicated, Joe saw a small table on which lay an assortment of handguns, two bayonets, and one shrapnel grenade. Joe frowned and his jaw set slightly. Reaching under his coat, he closed his hand on the automatic but did not relinquish it.

"It's all right, Joe," Regina said quietly. "They all came here for the same reason you did—to make someone pay. And realized it couldn't be done. There's no way anyone can *pay*. We can only learn." She nodded toward the man at the typewriter. "They're all telling their stories, Joe—they're being recorded for history. You can tell yours, too."

Joe put Billy's pistol on the table.

Moses held out his hand. "Welcome, brother."

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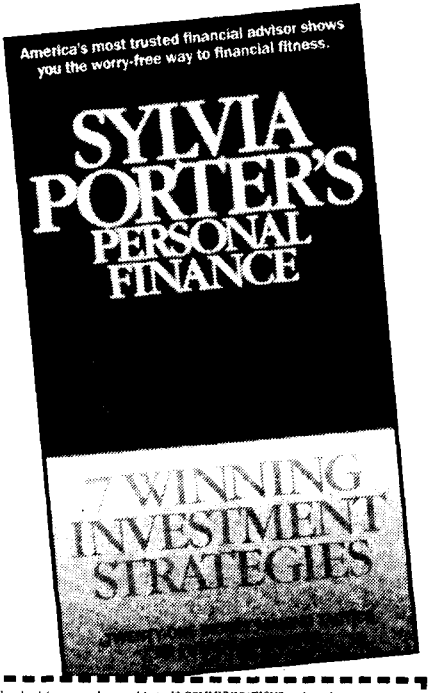
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a *NEW* Griswold story by

ISAAC ASIMOV

Griswold sipped at the Scotch-and-soda he had been holding firmly in his hand and said, "I found a dog once."

A wonder-dog? he was asked.

"No," he said. "Just an ordinary, nondescript mutt . . ."

THE LOST DOG

by ISAAC ASIMOV

The conversation had turned to pets, and both Jennings and Baranov were overflowing with wonder-tales of pets they had owned or had known.

I, as a non-pet person, was more than a little annoyed. Having no stories of my own to contribute, I occupied myself in pooh-poohing theirs. I denied that dogs had human intelligence, that horses were gifted with telepathy, and that cats had a sly wisdom that routed their owners every time.

I was sneered at, of course, and finally out of sheer desperation I called on Griswold for help. He, to all appearances, had been sleeping soundly throughout the sometimes heated discussion, but I never doubted his capacity to know what was going on despite any state of unconsciousness he might appear to be immersed in.

"Griswold," I said, "did you ever encounter any superhuman animals?"

Griswold's ice-blue eyes opened and one of his formidable eyebrows lifted sardonically. He sipped at the Scotch-and-soda he had been holding firmly in his hand and said, "I found a dog once."

"A wonder-dog?" I asked suspiciously.

"No," he said, "just an ordinary, nondescript mutt."

"If he's not a wonder-dog," I said, "then the argument is settled.

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If, with your imagination, you can't claim you were involved with a wonder-dog, then I maintain there aren't any."

"This dog—" said Griswold.

"That's all right," I said, waving my hand at him negligently. "We don't need the story."

This dog [said Griswold] was brought to my attention by Katherine Adelman, a nurse with whom I had been rather friendly in times past. What's more, I still had some youthful fire in me—this was several decades ago—and I was sentimental enough to be willing to listen to her, even though at that time, as I recall, I had much of greater moment to occupy my mind.

She told me there was a man dying in one of her wards and she was very upset over it.

"I'm sorry," I said mechanically, though I knew she must encounter death every day, it could be no stranger to her.

"He's a derelict," she said. "He was picked up on the street and brought in. We know practically nothing about him, except part of his name. When we asked him his name, he managed a strangled 'Jeff.' That was all he ever said. After that he just lay there, barely conscious, and then he slipped off into a kind of semi-coma."

"Is he being well treated?" I asked—a bit sardonically. The hospital, after all, however high-minded its ideals might be, subsisted on money, and coddling a dying derelict must go against the grain.

"Of course," she said, with a touch of reproach. And then, showing that she quite understood the point I was making, she added, "He won't be much of an expense. He'll be dead in a day or two."

You must understand that in those days the medical profession was not quite as well equipped with devices to keep the soul within the body against the body's will. People died more speedily and easily, and with greater dignity.

I said, "Why are you concerned, Kate, aside from your general disapproval of death?"

"It's a little thing. As I told you, he was found on the street, and I'm sure he'd gone out, sick as he was, squandering his last strength in the cold and the wet in order to try to find his dog." There were tears in her eyes, and I grew uneasy. She was an ardent dog-lover—that had been an important factor in spoiling our pleasant relationship—and I knew that the matter of the dog would weigh far more heavily with her than anything else would. She was going to ask me to do something, and I might not be able to refuse.

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I said, "Did he tell you so?"

"No. He was past talking, as I said, but he managed to scrawl a note on a piece of paper I brought him for the purpose."

"I presume you also brought him a pen."

"Yes, and a board to write on."

"How did you know he wanted all that?"

"He was trying to talk and failing. He could only wheeze and cough in a most pathetic way, and when he made weak but desperate writing gestures it was obvious what he wanted. I've dealt with so many dying people, Griswold, I can almost read their minds."

I nodded. "I'm guessing you have the note with you and that you want me to look at it."

"Yes, I do," she said, and showed me a scrap of paper. "He went into the semi-coma while he was writing it."

I don't have that piece of paper to show to you, and I rather despair of reproducing the exact wording, orthography, and handwriting, but I shall use the amenities of the Union Club library to produce something that will be close enough for the purpose.

PLEEZ MY DORG WAZ
TAKEN TO THE POND GET
IT FOR ME PLEEZ I CANT
DAY WITHOUT I SAY GOODBY
IT ANSERS TO ITS NAME
WHICH IS

Kate was weeping by now. She said, "He must have been too sick to prevent his dog—unlicensed, I'm sure—from being taken away. I suppose he gathered his last strength to go to the pound to retrieve his dog and then collapsed en route."

I said, "And you haven't been able to find out anything about him? Has he any friends?"

She shook her head. "He's just a derelict. He doesn't live in this area. Neither the police nor the people at the local soup-kitchen recognize him. He may be utterly homeless, living out of garbage cans, with nothing but his dog for company. His clothes were rags and he had no effects—certainly no money. I suppose if we ran a

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full investigation we might find out something, but that's not important. What I need to do is get his dog."

"What good would that do?" I asked gloomily.

"He killed himself trying to get that dog, Griswold, and now he's going to die utterly alone. No one should die alone."

"Many people have to," I said, trying to console her and feeling that I was only sounding heartless. "Can you get the dog?"

"I went to the pound this morning," she said. "I didn't know exactly when they'd picked up the dog and they couldn't identify any as belonging to a particular dying derelict. They knew nothing about it. They just picked up unlicensed dogs and they had over a dozen—it seemed like a hundred to me. I wanted to take them all and bring them to the poor man. If he woke up, he'd know if one were his. But of course I could never bring that horde of dogs to his room. I'd be lucky to smuggle in *one*."

"You'd be risking your job."

"I know. But which one would it be? All I knew was that it would answer to its name. But he never managed to finish the note and write its name. —Did you ever read *Rumpelstiltskin*, Griswold?"

"Of course," I said. "When I was a child."

"I felt like the princess who was going to lose her baby to the evil little dwarf unless she could guess his name. Except that she had a year to do the guessing and I had only an hour or so. I just kept calling out, 'Rex,' 'Fido,' 'Spot'—every doggy name I could think of—and got nowhere. Some dogs barked and yelped and ran about, but they weren't responding to some particular name."

"You don't even know if the dog is male or female, do you?"

"No. But after I called Rex I tried Regina, and after I called Prince I tried Princess. I tried ordinary names—Bill and Jane, for instance. I tried Curly and Genevieve." She looked at me and tried to smile. "I even tried Rumpelstiltskin."

I said, "I take it that didn't work."

"No. Nothing worked. I finally had to give up."

I said, "You know, Kate, the dog may have been put down."

"Oh, *no*," she said, in obvious pain. "They keep it for several days in case the owner shows up, or someone wants it." Then she said, "I suppose that no one *would* want it, though. I keep thinking that that penniless old man must have had a penniless old dog, if you know what I mean. Their love for each other was the only possession in all the world that either of them had. —And I must do something about it."

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I nodded. She was a soft-hearted girl. It wasn't her fault that the world had failed to turn her cynical.

She said, "So I came to you."

"What can I do?"

"Won't you come to the pound with me now? I still have a couple of hours before my work-shift begins."

"I can do that if I have to, but what else can I do?"

"You may be able to think of a name I couldn't think of. Or you may be able to tell which dog is the derelict's just by looking at it. You know how clever you are."

I said, "I'm not clever enough to pluck a name out of thin air, Kate. Even the princess only got the dwarf's name because she overheard him announce it."

But the tears were rolling quietly down her cheeks—and she *was* pretty, and I was quite young, and the memories I had did their mischief. I said, "Well, let me think."

She waited for me, watching with her big, trusting eyes, and that gave me no choice. I said, "Very well, let's go to the pound."

We went there and were taken to the department of recent acquisitions, if I might call it that. It smelled and it was noisy and I didn't like it. It was the first time I'd ever visited a pound, as it happened.

I slapped my knees and called out a name—and one of the dogs went wild. He yelped happily and threw himself at the mesh barrier trying to get at me, with his tail wagging into a blur.

I said to the attendant in charge, "I want that dog. It belongs to a friend of mine. I'll pay for the license and any other fee required, but I must have it now. My friend is dying."

Kate was wearing her nurse's uniform. She presented her hospital badge with her photograph and confirmed that it was life and death, and we got the dog.

We raced to the hospital and, with a sympathetic doctor, and quite against the hospital rules, we smuggled the dog into the room in which its master lay dying.

The dog emitted a muffled whine and nuzzled the derelict's hand. The dying man's eyes opened at the touch, and his head turned slightly. He could do no more than smile faintly and his hand trembled as he reached out to pat the dog's head just once. He died, then, with his only friend licking his hand.

Afterward, Kate took the dog away, much against its will. She

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left it in my charge, but at the end of her shift she took it over and adopted it.

The dog died a year afterward and, eventually, so did Kate. It was I who sat at her bedside and made certain that she didn't die alone, either.

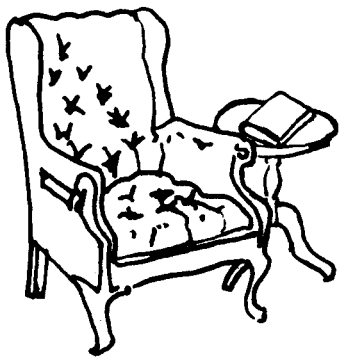
Griswold's eyes were blinking as he finished his drink, and he rubbed his nose rather violently.

We did not speak for a while but then Jennings said softly, "But how did you come to know the dog's name?"

Griswold said, "It was just a guess. The only thing we knew about the man was that his name was Jeff. I had to ask myself what someone named Jeff would call his dog if the dog was a shaggy, nondescript, unkempt mongrel. Well, there was once a comic strip that maintained its popularity over half a century or more called *Mutt and Jeff.* Augustus Mutt was a human character in the strip, but might it not occur to someone named Jeff who owned a mutt to call him Mutt in honor of the strip? It was a long chance, but with Kate looking at me I had to try."

I said sardonically, "A long chance indeed."

"Not for you three," growled Griswold. "As soon as I mentioned the dog, I described him as an ordinary, nondescript mutt, remember? How much more of a hint did you want?"



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a *NEW* short story by

IAN STUART

"Joyce Good's gone off," Mary said.

"Gone off?" Colin stared at her. Even to him his voice sounded unnatural. He tried to cover the telltale croak with a sudden cough.

There was no sign that Mary had noticed anything. "She went out last night without saying a word to her mother or leaving a note. She doesn't seem to have taken any clothes with her, either. Mrs. Good's worried stiff . . ."

SEEING JOYCE DEAD

by IAN STUART

"Don't dig there!" Colin called.

The three children looked up. "Why not, Dad?" Bobby asked.

Colin couldn't explain the fear he felt, so he just said, "Don't, that's all."

As a rule they never came to this end of the beach, but it was a lovely August morning and their usual stretches of sand had been too crowded for comfort. When Mary suggested they come here beyond the headland he hadn't dared object too strongly. He wished he could bring himself to tell her about Joyce—Mary was always so calm, so controlled. Sometimes it almost seemed that she was incapable of giving way to any deep emotion. Looking back, Colin could see that that had been the cause of everything.

"They'll be all right," she said now, surprised by his sharpness. He had been on edge ever since last night and she was sure he hadn't slept much. She could cope with his mood so long as it didn't last too long, but he mustn't take it out on the boys.

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Daring, Peter thrust his spade into the sand and looked across the forty yards of beach, waiting for his father's reaction.

"I said not there!" Colin shouted. As if he felt some explanation, even a false one, was necessary, he added, "The tide comes in very fast here and your castle would be washed away before you'd finished it! Let's have a swim now, then Mum's got some chocolate biscuits!"

"Oh, good," Peter said, relieved to be presented with an excuse for not carrying his defiance any further.

It had become a family ritual during summer holidays—a swim about eleven, then the crisps and chocolate biscuits Mary bought at the little general store on their way to the beach. She watched the eight-year-old twins drop their spades and come running toward her, followed more slowly by Helen, who was eleven and hardly ever ran anywhere. Helen was so different from the boys, so self-sufficient. Withdrawn, almost.

"Will you come in with us, Mum?" Bobby inquired hopefully.

"Not today, Bob."

"Why not?" Peter wanted to know. "*Please*, Mum. You never come now."

Mary laughed, pleased that they wanted her. But she had never liked bathing very much and now she was too plump to feel quite comfortable in swimsuits. They made her self-conscious.

"I don't feel like it today," she said, aware of Helen watching her coolly. Mary found that level stare disconcerting. Half the time, she had no idea what her daughter was thinking.

"Don't bother Mum," Colin told the twins. "She'll come swimming with us one day. Come on, I'll race you to the water." He started across the beach and the twins, their pleas to their mother to join them already nearly forgotten, chased after him, shrieking that it wasn't fair, he'd had a start.

Their laughter drifted back to Mary. "Aren't you going?" she asked Helen.

"Yes, of course, Mummy." Helen walked away, a thin, composed little figure in her blue swimsuit. She looked such a child, her mother thought, yet in some ways she was almost frighteningly mature.

Mary sighed gently. Her family were her whole world, she loved them so much she couldn't imagine them not being together. But lately she had had to face the possibility. Colin was so much more emotional than she was. She found it difficult to show him how much she loved him. Always at the end, her cool, calm center stood between her and any passionate commitment.

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Leaning over, she picked up the paper Colin had been reading. She shouldn't sigh, she thought, she was very lucky. As a family, they had a lot to be thankful for. Colin enjoyed his work teaching at the Comprehensive, and he was good at it—Mr. Denness, the head, had told her so. In another year or two he would get a school of his own. She was glad he wasn't like Roger Lane and Bill Goodwin, the other members of the English Department, who had only gone into teaching because they weren't qualified for the jobs they really wanted.

Turning to the crossword, she reached over to take Colin's ball-point pen from the inside breast pocket of his jacket. It wasn't there. That's odd, she thought. As long as she had known him he had always kept his pens in that pocket. It used to be his old Parker, but last Christmas she had bought him a new one with a matching fountain pen. If he had lost either of them, it would be just like him to say nothing. He would go to surprising lengths to avoid hurting her or the children. The way he had tried to prevent her finding out about that girl. She thrust the thought away.

After twenty minutes, he and the children returned, Helen as usual some way behind the boys despite her longer legs. Mary handed round the crisps and poured the lemon squash she had brought from home. "I was going to do the crossword," she told Colin, "but I couldn't find your pen."

"I think I must have dropped it." He looked very upset. "The clip was a bit loose. I expect it's in the house somewhere."

"Oh, Colin!" Mary was surprised how distressed she felt. She had taken a lot of trouble choosing her present, making sure the fountain pen had the sort of nib he liked. "When did you have it last?"

"I don't know."

"You wrote to Mother yesterday afternoon. Did you use it after that?"

"I can't remember."

"Well, you went to your meeting in the evening—did you have it then?"

"I don't know," Colin repeated, almost shouting. He didn't want to talk about the meeting. He hadn't gone to it. Taking a grip on himself, he added more quietly, "I must have had it this morning to make out the check for the gas people."

"You borrowed mine," Mary told him. "Don't you remember? You said you'd left it in the bedroom."

"That's where it is, then."

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"Are you sure?"

"It must be."

But he wasn't sure, Mary thought. It was unlike him to lose things. Was that why this sudden apprehension?

"Let's play French cricket," Peter demanded, bored by so much talk about a silly old pen. "Come on, Dad."

"Not now," his father told him shortly.

Mary smiled reassuringly at the child. "Don't worry, dear," she said to Colin, "I expect it'll turn up."

Colin half hoped it wouldn't. He knew he must have dropped it last night while he was—

Oh, God! he thought.

"Where's Helen?" Mary asked as they sat down to lunch. Colin had dropped his wife off in the High Street to do some shopping on the way home, and as soon as he was in the house he had searched everywhere for his pen without success.

"She was looking for shells or something," Bobby volunteered in the deeply scornful tone small boys reserve for their sisters' activities.

"I hope she isn't too long." Mary told herself Helen would never go in the water when she was alone. With a casualness that surprised her she remarked, "Joyce Good's gone off."

"Gone off?" Colin stared at her. Even to him, his voice had sounded unnatural, Mary must have noticed it. He tried to cover the telltale croak with a sudden cough.

There was no sign that Mary had noticed anything. "She went out last night without saying a word to her mother or leaving a note. She doesn't seem to have taken any clothes with her, either. Mrs. Good's worried stiff."

"Who's Joyce Good?" Peter wanted to know.

"She works in Mr. Smith's shop in St. Matthew's Street."

"I heard Mrs. Green telling somebody she was a cheap little whore," Bobby announced. "What's a whore?"

"They're things that grow on hawthorn bushes, stupid," his brother told him.

"Joyce Good doesn't grow on a bush." Bobby laughed with delight at his own witticism.

"That's enough," Mary said firmly. To Colin she added, "There was a police car outside the house when I came by."

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Colin felt sick. He forced himself to take some vegetables, and as he did so Helen walked in.

"Oh, darling, where have you been?" her mother exclaimed, giving the little girl a quick maternal once-over. "Your socks and sandals are soaked."

Helen seemed not to hear her. Walking up to her father, she held something out to him. "This is yours, isn't it, Daddy?" she asked.

Colin stared at what was in her hand, unable to speak.

"Oh, Helen!" Mary said, delighted. "It's Daddy's pen! Where did you find it?"

"Near the breakwater where you wouldn't let us build a sand castle," Helen answered, still looking at her father. "Then those men came and started digging there and they sent me away."

"What men?" Mary asked.

"The policemen. They put a sort of screen thing up."

Helen was still holding out the pen and it seemed to Colin that it was like an accusing finger pointing at him. His hand shaking, he took it and put it in his pocket.

"Thank you, darling," he said, his mouth dry.

He thought he would never forget the look in his wife's eyes at that moment.

They got through the meal somehow. It helped that the boys had noticed nothing unusual, but Helen kept looking at her father, and he wondered fearfully why. What was she thinking? It wasn't like a child's look—it was too knowing. But she *couldn't* know, it was impossible.

Later, when he and Mary were alone, he longed to explain, and several times he nearly did, risking everything, but always at the last moment his nerve failed. She had nearly found out that he was seeing Joyce two days ago when she came home early and heard him say on the phone that he would be at the usual place at seven. He had felt cheap telling her he was talking to one of the other members of the committee about the meeting, but what else could he have done? And she had believed him.

The day dragged on. Colin knew that if the police were looking for Joyce, sooner or later they would find out about his relationship with her and come for him.

It was just before seven when the front doorbell rang. Colin's heart seemed to leap into his throat and he dared not look at his wife, although he knew she was watching him anxiously.

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"I'll go," she said.

Colin didn't know whether to stay in the dining room or go out to the garden. If it was the police, there would be less risk of the children overhearing what was said in the garden. But his limbs seemed to be affected by a dreadful lethargy and he made no move to go.

Mary was talking to somebody in the hall.

"I'll just come in for a minute, then," a woman's voice said.

Colin recognized it and a wave of relief surged through him. Mrs. Jennings, their next-door neighbor, was one of those bustling women who need always to know everything that is going on in their locality and to pass it on. Good news or bad, it didn't really matter, although bad was generally more satisfying.

The door opened and she came into the room, a big-boned woman in a nondescript summer dress.

"Oh, good evening, Mr. Rayment," she said, glad to have found another listener. "Isn't it terrible?"

Colin summoned up the courage to ask what was terrible. But it was unnecessary—Mrs. Jennings forged on regardless.

"Mrs. Rayment says you haven't heard. The police have found Joyce Good! Or what's left of her, poor girl. You know she went out last night and never came back? Somebody cut her throat and buried her on the beach."

Colin met Mary's eye and looked away quickly, unable to face what he saw there.

"Whereabouts did they find her?" Mary asked, frowning.

"Just the other side of the headland, near the breakwater." Mrs. Jennings took the invitation as spoken and sat down. "That's the quietest part of the beach, isn't it? I mean, anywhere else some kiddie might have started digging and—well, he'd have to be sure nothing like that happened, wouldn't he?"

"Yes," Mary said. "How awful. We were there with Helen and the boys this morning. Bobby wanted to build a sand castle and—" She stopped abruptly, not looking at Colin. "I wonder how they knew where to look."

"According to what I've heard," Mrs. Jennings went on, with the satisfaction of one imparting her superior knowledge, "the police have found something."

His pen! Colin thought. No, that was impossible. Helen had discovered the pen before they started their search.

Mary was staring at him, anxiety etched sharp on her pleasant,

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homely features. "Do you know what it is?" she asked, sounding slightly breathless.

"A bracelet," Mrs. Jennings told her. "Apparently it was in the bushes beside the road near where she was found. It hadn't been there long, and the police think it may have been ripped off in the struggle. They're looking for the woman it belongs to, but I can't see why. A woman can't have killed that girl. I mean, no woman could have dragged her all that way across the sand and buried her, could she?"

A woman hadn't had to, Colin thought. He had done that for her. But why should a woman have murdered Joyce?

Unless— He could imagine Joanna Lane going to almost any lengths to preserve her marriage. She had a tough, ruthless streak, and now that he came to think about it her arms were invariably bedecked with bangles when he saw her. Not that that meant anything, Mary sometimes wore bracelets, although she wasn't today. There could be a number of women who would have liked to see Joyce dead.

"Anyway, it was a man this old fellow told the police he'd seen digging on the beach just after seven yesterday evening," Mrs. Jennings said comfortably, apparently gratified that one of her own sex couldn't have been the killer. "He was some way off and he thought whoever it was was digging for bait, so he didn't pay much attention. The police think it must have been the murderer."

"Oh!" Mary said.

Colin wondered what else the anonymous watcher had noticed. If he had seen him, he must have seen his car, parked as near as he could drive it to the edge of the beach. Perhaps even seen him carrying Joyce's body across the sand. If he had, the police would keep that to themselves until they were ready to pounce. The palms of Colin's hands were damp with sweat.

Last night he had hardly slept. He had lain in the dark beside Mary, reliving a hundred times that dreadful drive home to fetch a shovel, with Joyce in the trunk of the car. Mary had gone to visit her sister yesterday afternoon and been a bit later home than she had intended.

At the time, he had thanked God that she was back early enough for him to meet Joyce before the meeting. Now he wished as fervently that he had broken their date and driven straight to old Rushton's house. Once his ghastly task was finished, it was too late—the meeting would have been over.

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Mrs. Jennings was still talking. Why couldn't the stupid woman go?

The police didn't come that evening, nor the next day. Mary, returned from shopping, reported that the town was buzzing with rumors, but so far no one had been arrested.

Colin wandered about the house and garden, unable to settle down to anything. When Mary or the children spoke to him he answered in monosyllables. His fear was like a terrible sickness.

He would rather have been at school—at least there, he would have had other things to occupy his mind—but it was still a month before the start of the new term. There were tasks in the garden he had promised himself he would do this holiday, but he couldn't summon up the energy to tackle them. Life seemed to have stopped, leaving him in limbo. He knew disaster was inevitable, and while he waited for it he was merely going through the motions of living.

Memories of Joyce haunted him. Joyce, lithe and full-breasted and with her long, silver-blonde hair, her crimson lips and fingernails, and her cheap, flashy clothes. Perhaps it was the excessive makeup—she had never looked altogether clean. What could have possessed him to risk everything for a cheap little tart like her?

But he knew what. When he was with her, nothing else counted, he was engulfed in a passion he had never experienced before he met her. And she flattered him.

"I like older men," she had murmured once, snuggling closer in his arms in the back of his car. "They're sort of solid and reliable. And you're quiet, you don't shout and boast like a lot of young fellows I know." She giggled. "But you're not *too* quiet, are you?"

Monday evening he had been going to tell her it was over, that he wasn't going to see her any more.

He almost wished the police would come, to end this agony of suspense. It was imposing a terrible strain on Mary, too. Although they hadn't said anything, he knew she had hardly slept last night, either. Even the children were aware of something wrong. He could tell from the silent, dispirited way they sat through meals. And although it had been hot again today, they hadn't suggested going to the beach.

It was impossible that Mary could know what he had done, but he realized that his manner these last two days had been so strange that she must suspect something. In a strange way, they had seemed extra close, yet he still couldn't bring himself to tell her about his

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affair with Joyce and how, when he found the girl's body half concealed amongst the gorse bushes, he had put it in the trunk of the car and later carried it across the sand and buried it there by the breakwater where few people ever went because, if she was found, the police might learn about their relationship and suspect him of killing her. And it had all been so pointless—by now they must know, anyway. So why hadn't they come?

He realized that until that moment he had given very little thought to who killed her—he had been too obsessed with his own worries. Colin had never kidded himself that he was the only man in Joyce's life—he wasn't that naive, and girls like Joyce asked for trouble. There was his suspicion that Roger Lane was seeing her. Could Roger have done it? He had married Joanna for her money and it hadn't worked out—they got along abominably—he might easily become involved with a girl like Joyce. Moreover, he had a violent temper, and if Joyce had threatened to tell his wife—

Oh, God! Colin thought.

The doorbell rang. Mary was in the garden and he made himself go to answer it, a sick, empty feeling in the pit of his stomach. He had been wrong—even suspense was better than the reality.

There were three of them, two men in plainclothes and a WPC in uniform.

"Mr. Rayment?" the older of the plainclothesmen inquired. He was middle-aged and burly, with weathered features and shrewd eyes.

"Yes," Colin said, forcing the word through dry lips.

"Is your wife at home, sir?"

"My wife?" He stared at them.

"Yes, sir."

"She's in the garden."

He forgot to ask them why they wanted to see her—he just led the way through the house and out by the back door. She was cutting down some dead shoots, holding the tops with one hand while she slashed at the stems with her blade—just as she had held Joyce Good's head from behind while she cut her throat. Her expression was quite calm.

"Q"

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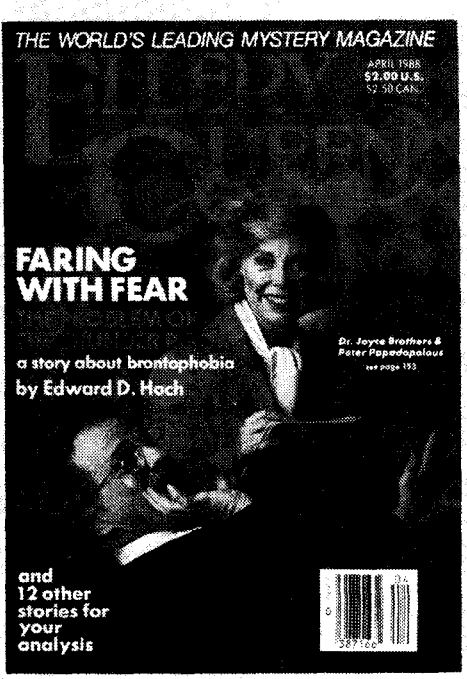

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Despite her personal belief that booze was only acceptable as heart medicine, Edna was a good enough businesswoman to see that Zelda would need to sell beer when she took over at the Sunshine Cafe because the world had gone so much to the dogs . . .

UNFRIED CHICKENS

by H. H. MORRIS

My Uncle Melvin always advised me, "Don't have no dealings with no chicken that ain't fried, boy." Uncle Melvin raised chickens for a living. And because he raised them, he thought chickens, dreamed chickens, cussed chickens, and ate chickens till the day he died. Aunt Sarah wasn't sure whether to have him embalmed or plucked and stuffed with dried bread, sage, celery, and onions.

I'd done a fair job of following Uncle Melvin's advice most of my adult life. I like my chickens fried in the proper country way, with a thick crust and well done, tender meat. Edna, whose Sunshine Cafe had fried chicken as a Sunday special even when the trout were plentiful, made sure that I got at least one plump drumstick or thigh. Recently, Edna kept telling me that she'd passed the secret family recipe on to Zelda, now cooking in the cafe. Newly divorced and back from the city, Zelda was Edna's only child. And Edna said to me that when a restaurant needed a liquor license—and that despite her personal belief being that booze was only acceptable as heart medicine, she was a good enough businesswoman to see that Zelda would need to sell beer when she took over because the world had gone so much to the dogs—there was nothing like a deputy's name on the application to smooth the political pathway and make straight the crookedness of the bureaucracy.

"So long as I'm a deputy," I told Edna, "I don't want a thing to do with selling beer."

That was more than ethics. It was common sense. But it could be revised, since I definitely wanted something to do with Zelda. Most of the ladies a deputy meets aren't nice, young, and pretty. And Zelda could apparently cook. That combination was leading me

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around to Edna's way of thinking until Parker Rigdon reminded me that chickens had more parts than drumsticks and thighs and didn't always come fried.

Rigdon owned forty acres of bad luck along Indian River. Grain refused to sprout between his plentiful rocks. The grasses that came up made fat livestock quickly lean. Until he discovered chickens, Rigdon had been one more farmer close to bankruptcy. Now he was really proud of his brooder houses. I wondered what Uncle Melvin would have said about a man who saw chickens as the rescue from disaster instead of the primary reason for original sin.

Rigdon said, "Deputy, someone stole nigh onto a thousand of my baby chicks—and they was only seven weeks old."

"Why would anybody steal a seven-week-old chicken?" I asked him.

"I don't know. You're the deputy."

The ground around the brooder house was hard. I took some pictures of what Rigdon figured might be the offending truck tracks. Then he showed me a couple of other brooder houses—one filled with chicks less than two weeks of age, another with broilers just about ready to be picked up by the processor. The aroma was potent, the noise worse.

"So when did you discover your loss?" I asked Rigdon.

"This morning. I called you as soon as I realized they were missing."

"This must hurt. Another few weeks and you could have sold them."

"Thank God for insurance," Rigdon said.

"Insurance?"

"My processor wants me to carry it."

"Uncle Melvin never would have believed it."

"Of course, it pays only a percentage of the guaranteed price."

The chicken business Rigdon explained wasn't the one that had inspired Uncle Melvin's wrathful sermons. Of course, the farmer still took a huge risk, but now the processing plants had stepped in to share at least a piece of it. In the changeover, most farmers had ceased acting as independent businessmen who bought baby chicks from the hatchery that offered the best deal, purchased feed from a local merchant, and kept the brooder warm with power from the electric company or oil from a dealer. Back in those days, the farmer had also sold to the processor who'd give him the best deal the week the chickens matured.

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Now they literally had a franchise. They made changes so that their brooder houses met company standards, bought the three-day-old chicks from a company-approved or company-affiliated hatchery, and used the feed required by—often vended by—the processor ready to buy broilers or fryers. That processor guaranteed a minimum purchase price for chicks that had reached the proper weight at the correct age. It was a lot like the deals strawberry, bean, and tomato growers reached with canneries.

God still had to furnish the proper weather for crops—or, in the case of chickens, the proper lack of viruses and other health problems. Still, the deal looked so sure that a handful of insurance companies now offered affordable policies covering specified catastrophes—including theft.

I asked Rigdon, "Do you have a gun?"

"Sure. Several."

"Next time some rustler pulls a truck into your lane, through a gate directly in front of your house, and down to your brooder houses, fire away. The county hates paying for unnecessary trials."

He said, "I would have this time if I'd heard him, Deputy. I'm a sound sleeper. All of us are. We live right next to a railroad track and a major highway."

They did. And once the chicken rustlers had reached that highway, no one could track them.

The next rustling case occurred in Squeeze Holler. It was outside my territory. A young deputy named Frank Tazewell investigated. He got casts of the truck's tire tracks. I called him up to congratulate him.

"It rained the night before," he said modestly.

"Was it a real noisy rain?"

"What do you mean?"

"Was it the kind of noisy rain people don't hear over?" I wanted to know.

"I doubt that the rain was the reason Mr. Alexander didn't hear anything. He's an old widower who just got married again. She's a looker and my age."

"Is she a talker?"

"You can't prove it by me. I talked with him."

"Thanks," I said. "Good report, Frank. Don't lose the cast of those tires."

I thought I could put it together, but within two days we got our

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third chicken rustling. This one occurred at Goshen, a thriving settlement some forty or sixty years ago, now a name barely remembered atop a tiny store and gas station. Most of Goshen belonged to various Palmers. There were Palmer brothers and Palmer cousins—and nary a one of them honest enough you had to worry about a slander suit if you confused him with another one. This call had come from Ivory Palmer. He traded livestock for his living, hunted for pleasure, and raised chickens for his sins. Everywhere we walked on his farm a couple of noisy hounds followed.

He said, "I guess I was lucky."

"What's lucky about getting robbed, Ivory?"

"A lot of them brooder houses are strictly my business, Deputy. No crooked, tight processor tells me where to buy, what to feed, or where to sell. I cut corners. But others, those with the processed chickens, are where a smart man gives up. The thieves stole close to a thousand future fryers certified by the processor and covered by insurance."

He laughed. I joined him.

Then I said, "Next time you hear a noise, shoot."

"The noises around here are mine. I snore louder than a hog in clover-scented honey. My old lady sleeps with earplugs. And when the kids don't think they hear me snoring, they figure it's me in my truck. A cattle dealer leaves early to catch the worms called buyers."

I couldn't get a cast, but I took a picture of the suspect tire tracks. Then I thanked Ivory for the information and left. I was just a good little deputy doing paperwork that could later be copied so that taxpayers in the county might collect insurance benefits.

The sheriff had started swearing. Media types from a considerable distance away had closed in on the county to cover the outbreak of chicken-rustling. The city lads and ladies seemed to figure stealing anything with feathers was a takeoff on the Old West's cattle rustlers. We weren't the Old West. And while the sheriff liked a belly laugh as well as the next man, he kind of objected when he was the object of all the laughter. "You and I and Frank will solve it," I assured him. "You might as well have the D.A. there, too."

We're a lucky county. Sheriff and district attorney belong to the same faction in the same party. Both men know what it takes to achieve their primary aim in life: to get re-elected every four years. Consequently, neither brought the press to the conference room in the courthouse.

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I began with my photos of the tire treads at the Palmer and Rigdon farms. Then I tossed in the cast Frank had made at the Alexander place. No one had to hunt for similarities. We'd need help from the state's forensic experts to find differences. Once everybody agreed to the obvious—that the same skunk had stolen all 3,000 (or close to it) chickens—I showed them a registration that had come straight out of the state's computer. It was for a stock truck, the kind cattle dealers drive.

Just about the time they thought they followed me, I let them listen to tapes of my calls to the headquarters of the processor who buys 99 percent—give or take a couple of breasts—of the broilers and fryers raised in the county. I'd neglected to tell the young lady I'm a deputy. Thinking she talked to a farmer ready to convert to the company franchise, she told me what her outfit offered and what it demanded. She made it clear that the processor didn't take responsibility for acts of God—like normal chicken diseases.

"Uncle Melvin always said that the true ambition of nine chickens out of ten is to die before developing decent drumsticks," I explained. "The university extension agent says Uncle Melvin didn't exaggerate as much as you might think."

They looked at the carefully derived statistics from tax-sponsored scholarship. Then they looked at the number the young lady from the processing plant had given me. Neither public scholarship nor private enterprise expected over ninety percent of the chickens to live.

"These are the same figures from the insurance company," I said. "There's a young attorney in the claims division very curious about this—now that I've called it to his attention."

The rest was simple math. Back in Uncle Melvin's day, a farmer used to order chicks in lots of 100 from the hatchery. A box would contain around 103 or 105 to cover the deaths that inevitably occurred in shipping. The lady from the processing plant had talked in terms of 1,000 baby chicks—and said it meant 1,030 to 1,050 to cover deaths en route so the farmer had a decent shot at a square 1,000. And no one counted again till market day.

Rigdon, Palmer, and Alexander had counted. On any batch of chickens, a farmer ran the risk of sliding below the profit margin the processor had set. The insurer didn't pay off on chicken viruses or suffocation. Fire would mean burning down useful brooder houses. Theft was an obvious reason why there were no chicken bodies around to count.

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"Proof?" the D.A. asked me.

"Who'd steal a seven-week-old chicken?"

"You mean three thousand of them?"

"A lot less," I told him. "Still, a seven-week-old chicken is a scrawnier meal than a plump quail."

"If somebody could resell those chicks—"

"Like a livestock dealer?"

He and the sheriff didn't really want to take the tires off Ivory Palmer's truck. I dragged Frank out of the courthouse and into a nearby bar.

"That was brilliant work," he said.

"And it's over. You did your job. I did mine."

"It will come up in court."

"Only if more chickens get stolen."

"But you have the proof."

I said, "Those old boys we left in there like winning elections. Do you really think they'll come down on the side of a rich insurance company at the expense of some poor chicken farmers who'll claim they got a diseased batch of chicks from a crooked processor?"

"Not when you put it that way."

"So now that they know Ivory Palmer did it, the sheriff will lean heavily on Ivory. And Ivory, being a smart man, will find a new way to steal money. End of case. —Speaking of chicken, do you want some of the best fried drumsticks this side of heaven?"

"Sure," said Frank.

Figuring he needed a reward, I took young, handsome Frank Tazewell to the Sunshine Cafe. Edna and Zelda had a batch of chicken fried and ready to serve. Frank ate the drumsticks and thighs. He moved on to the white meat. And before I knew it, he was having Edna and Zelda bring us the necks, backs, and ribs. Then he asked for the gizzards.

That was too much. I quit chewing. If God had meant man to eat chicken innards, He'd have made them big enough to find without a magnifying glass. Zelda sat on his lap. Edna started talking about the need to sell beer.

Frank and Zelda got married last week. And the last two times I've gone into the Sunshine Cafe, Edna has served me wings.

"Q"

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a contemporary reprint by

RAYMOND CARVER

In Raymond Carver's stories, Hope Harris wrote in the Houston Chronicle, *"we think we know what's coming. But we're almost always wrong. What do our expectations tell us about ourselves? That is Carver's point, and his genius." This story by Mr. Carver, who was born in Clatskanie, Oregon, in 1939 and is now a Professor of English at Syracuse University, is from his collection,* What We Talk About When We Talk About Love *(Vintage Books), about which Robert Houston said in* The Nation: *"Nearly 200 years ago, Wordsworth and Coleridge started a revolution when they proclaimed their aim to write in 'the language really used by men.' Neither of them quite achieved that. Raymond Carver has. And it is terrifying."*

Bill said, "Anything wrong, man? I mean, you know."

Jerry finished his beer and then mashed the can. He shrugged.

"You know," he said.

Bill nodded.

Then Jerry said, "How about a little run?"

"Sounds good to me," Bill said. "I'll tell the women we're going . . ."

TELL THE WOMEN WE'RE GOING

by RAYMOND CARVER

Bill Jamison had always been best friends with Jerry Roberts. The two grew up in the south area, near the old fairgrounds,

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went through grade school and junior high together, and then on to Eisenhower, where they took as many of the same teachers as they could manage, wore each other's shirts and sweaters and pegged pants, and dated and banged the same girls—whichever came up as a matter of course.

Summers they took jobs together—swamping peaches, picking cherries, stringing hops, anything they could do that paid a little and where there was no boss to get on your ass. And then they bought a car together. The summer before their senior year, they chipped in and bought a red '54 Plymouth for $325.00.

They shared it. It worked out fine.

But Jerry got married before the end of the first semester and dropped out of school to work steady at Robby's Mart.

As for Bill, he'd dated the girl, too. Carol was her name, and she went just fine with Jerry, and Bill went over there every chance he got. It made him feel older, having married friends. He'd go over there for lunch or for supper, and they'd listen to Elvis or to Bill Haley and the Comets.

But sometimes Carol and Jerry would start making out right with Bill still there, and he'd have to get up and excuse himself and take a walk to Dezorn's Service Station to get some Coke because there was only the one bed in the apartment, a hideaway that came down in the living room. Or sometimes Jerry and Carol would head off to the bathroom and Bill would have to move to the kitchen and pretend to be interested in the cupboards and the refrigerator and not trying to listen.

So he stopped going over so much; and then June he graduated, took a job at the Darigold plant, and joined the National Guard. In a year he had a milk route of his own and was going steady with Linda. So Bill and Linda would go over to Jerry and Carol's, drink beer, and listen to records.

Carol and Linda got along fine, and Bill was flattered when Carol said that, confidentially, Linda was "a real person."

Jerry liked Linda, too. "She's great," Jerry said.

When Bill and Linda got married, Jerry was best man. The reception, of course, was at the Donnelly Hotel, Jerry and Bill cutting up together and linking arms and tossing off glasses of spiked punch. But once, in the middle of all this happiness, Bill looked at Jerry and thought how much older Jerry looked, a lot older than twenty-two. By then Jerry was the happy father of two kids and had moved

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up to assistant manager at Robby's, and Carol had one in the oven again.

They saw each other every Saturday and Sunday, sometimes oftener if it was a holiday. If the weather was good, they'd be over at Jerry's to barbecue hot dogs and turn the kids loose in the wading pool Jerry had got for next to nothing, like a lot of other things he got from the Mart.

Jerry had a nice house. It was up on a hill overlooking the Naches. There were other houses around, but not too close. Jerry was doing all right. When Bill and Linda and Jerry and Carol got together, it was always at Jerry's place because Jerry had the barbecue and the records and too many kids to drag around.

It was a Sunday at Jerry's place the time it happened.

The women were in the kitchen, straightening up. Jerry's girls were out in the yard throwing a plastic ball into the wading pool, yelling and splashing after it.

Jerry and Bill were sitting in the reclining chairs on the patio, drinking beer and just relaxing.

Bill was doing most of the talking—things about people they knew, about Darigold, about the four-door Pontiac Catalina he was thinking of buying.

Jerry was staring at the clothesline, or at the '68 Chevy hardtop that stood in the garage. Bill was thinking how Jerry was getting to be deep, the way he stared all the time and hardly did any talking at all.

Bill moved in his chair and lighted a cigarette.

He said, "Anything wrong, man? I mean, you know."

Jerry finished his beer and then mashed the can. He shrugged. "You know," he said.

Bill nodded.

Then Jerry said, "How about a little run?"

"Sounds good to me," Bill said. "I'll tell the women we're going."

They took the Naches River highway out to Gleed, Jerry driving. The day was sunny and warm, and air blew through the car.

"Where we headed?" Bill said.

"Let's shoot a few balls."

"Fine with me," Bill said. He felt a whole lot better just seeing Jerry brighten up.

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"Guy's got to get out," Jerry said. He looked at Bill. "You know what I mean?"

Bill understood. He liked to get out with the guys from the plant for the Friday-night bowling league. He liked to stop off twice a week after work to have a few beers with Jack Broderick. He knew a guy's got to get out.

"Still standing," Jerry said, as they pulled up onto the gravel in front of the Rec Center.

They went inside, Bill holding the door for Jerry, Jerry punching Bill lightly in the stomach as he went on by.

"Hey there!"

It was Riley.

"Hey, how you boys keeping?"

It was Riley coming around from behind the counter, grinning. He was a heavy man. He had on a short-sleeved Hawaiian shirt that hung outside his jeans. Riley said, "So how you boys been keeping?"

"Ah, dry up and give us a couple of Olys," Jerry said, winking at Bill. "So how you been, Riley?" Jerry said.

Riley said, "So how you boys doing? Where you been keeping yourselves? You boys getting any on the side? Jerry, the last time I seen you, your old lady was six months gone."

Jerry stood a minute and blinked his eyes.

"So how about the Olys?" Bill said.

They took stools near the window. Jerry said, "What kind of place is this, Riley, that it don't have any girls on a Sunday afternoon?"

Riley laughed. He said, "I guess they're all in church praying for it."

They each had five cans of beer and took two hours to play three racks of rotation and two racks of snooker, Riley sitting on a stool and talking and watching them play, Bill always looking at his watch and then looking at Jerry.

Bill said, "So what do you think, Jerry? I mean, what do you think?"

Jerry drained his can, mashed it, then stood for a time turning the can in his hand.

Back on the highway, Jerry opened it up—little jumps of eighty-five and ninety. They'd just passed an old pickup loaded with furniture when they saw the two girls.

"Look at that!" Jerry said, slowing. "I could use some of that."

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Jerry drove another mile or so and then pulled off the road. "Let's go back," he said. "Let's try it."

"Jesus," Bill said. "I don't know."

"I could use some," Jerry said.

Bill said, "Yeah, but I don't know."

"For Christ's sake," Jerry said.

Bill glanced at his watch and then looked all around. He said, "You do the talking. I'm rusty."

Jerry hooted as he whipped the car around.

He slowed when he came nearly even with the girls. He pulled the Chevy onto the shoulder across from them. The girls kept on going on their bicycles, but they looked at each other and laughed. The one on the inside was dark-haired, tall, and willowy. The other was light-haired and smaller. They both wore shorts and halters.

"Bitches," Jerry said. He waited for the cars to pass so he could pull a U. "I'll take the brunette," he said. "The little one's yours."

Bill moved his back against the front seat and touched the bridge of his sunglasses.

"They're not going to do anything," Bill said.

"They're going to be on your side," Jerry said. He pulled across the road and drove back. "Get ready."

"Hi," Bill said as the girls bicycled up. "My name's Bill."

"That's nice," the brunette said.

"Where are you going?" Bill said.

The girls didn't answer. The little one laughed. They kept bicycling and Jerry kept driving.

"Oh, come on now. Where you going?" Bill said.

"Noplace," the little one said.

"Where's noplace?" Bill said.

"Wouldn't you like to know?" the little one said.

"I told you my name," Bill said. "What's yours? My friend's Jerry."

The girls looked at each other and laughed.

A car came up from behind. The driver hit his horn.

"Cram it!" Jerry shouted.

He pulled off a little and let the car go around. Then he pulled back up alongside the girls.

Bill said, "We'll give you a lift. We'll take you where you want. That's a promise. You must be tired riding those bicycles. You look tired. Too much exercise isn't good for a person. Especially for girls."

The girls laughed.

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"You see?" Bill said. "Now tell us your names."

"I'm Barbara, she's Sharon," the little one said.

"All right!" Jerry said. "Now find out where they're going."

"Where you girls going?" Bill said. "Barb?"

She laughed. "Noplace," she said. "Just down the road."

"Where down the road?"

"Do you want me to tell them?" she said to the other girl.

"I don't care," the other girl said. "It doesn't make any difference. I'm not going to go anyplace with anybody anyway."

"Where you going?" Bill said. "Are you going to Picture Rock?"

The girls laughed.

"That's where they're going," Jerry said. He fed the Chevy gas and pulled up off onto the shoulder so that the girls had to come by on his side.

"Don't be that way," he said. "Come on, we're all introduced."

The girls just rode on by.

"I won't bite you!" Jerry shouted.

The brunette glanced back. It seemed to Jerry she was looking at him in the right kind of way. But with a girl you could never be sure.

He gunned it back onto the highway, dirt and pebbles flying from under the tires.

"We'll be seeing you!" Bill called as they went speeding by.

"It's in the bag," Jerry said. "You see the look that one gave me?"

"I don't know," Bill said. "Maybe we should cut for home."

"We got it made!" Jerry said.

He pulled off the road under some trees. The highway forked here at Picture Rock, one road going on to Yakima, the other heading for Naches, Enumclaw, the Chinook Pass, Seattle.

A hundred yards off the road was a high, sloping, black mound of rock, part of a low range of hills, honeycombed with footpaths and small caves, Indian sign-painting here and there on the cave walls. The cliff side of the rock faced the highway and all over it there were things like NACHES 67—GLEED WILDCATS—JESUS SAVES—BEAT YAKIMA—REPENT NOW.

They sat in the car, smoking cigarettes. Mosquitoes came in and tried to get at their hands.

"Wish we had a beer now," Jerry said. "I sure could go for a beer."

Bill said, "Me, too," and looked at his watch . . .

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When the girls came into view, Jerry and Bill got out of the car. They leaned against the fender in front.

"Remember," Jerry said, starting away from the car, "the dark one's mine. You got the other one."

The girls dropped their bicycles and started up one of the paths. They disappeared around a bend and then reappeared again, a little higher up. They were standing there and looking down.

"What're you guys following us for?" the brunette called down.

Jerry just started up the path.

The girls turned away and went off again at a trot.

Jerry and Bill kept climbing at a walking pace. Bill was smoking a cigarette, stopping every so often to get a good drag. When the path turned, he looked back and caught a glimpse of the car.

"Move it!" Jerry said.

"I'm coming," Bill said.

They kept climbing. But then Bill had to catch his breath. He couldn't see the car now. He couldn't see the highway, either. To his left and all the way down, he could see a strip of the Naches like a strip of aluminum foil.

Jerry said, "You go right and I'll go straight. We'll cut the cock-teasers off."

Bill nodded. He was too winded to speak.

He went higher for a while, and then the path began to drop, turning toward the valley. He looked and saw the girls. He saw them crouched behind an outcrop. Maybe they were smiling.

Bill took out a cigarette. But he couldn't get it lit. Then Jerry showed up. It didn't matter after that.

Bill had just wanted to make love. Or even to see them naked. On the other hand, it was okay with him if it didn't work out.

He never knew what Jerry wanted. But it started and ended with a rock. Jerry used the same rock on both girls, first on the dark-haired girl called Sharon and then on the one that was supposed to be Bill's.

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a *NEW* Maynard Bullock story by

JAMES POWELL

At the appointed time, Bullock was standing in the Mountie Burger parking lot in full regalia, scarlet tunic and all. Soon a four-wheel-drive pickup pulling a horse trailer paused at the curb with Theo Necropolis stooped over the steering wheel. Before getting in, Bullock went around back and looked inside the trailer. It was Bounding Mane, all right.

"It's me, boy!" he said. "You're safe now!"

The horse whinnied doubtfully . . .

THE KIDNAP OF BOUNDING MANE

by JAMES POWELL

To mark every Christmas, birthday, or other solemn occasion during his growing up, Ralston Seeley, like many a Canadian boy, received the latest in the Mounts of the Mounted adventure books by that lioness of his country's children's literature, Alberta Regina de la Quebec. He prized them all, from *Spanish Mane, Star of the Musical Ride,* the exploits of a horse famed on the Force for its flashing eyes and the proud, flamencolike tattoo of its hooves when it came to a stop, to the brave anti-smuggling exploits of *Water Mane, Horse of the Coastal Patrol.*

The sense of high purpose of these loyal animals moved him and he uttered many a moist sigh over their strength in adversity. But he enjoyed the lighter books in the series, too, like the one about the fat horse who hung around outside the barracks kitchen, *Chow Mane, Horse of the Cookhouse Door,* and would laugh out loud and look around at the furniture as though encouraging it to join in.

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Was it any wonder, then, that on his graduation from Upper Canada College, Seeley expressed a desire to join the Force? When his wealthy father, the fast-food-franchising magnate, objected, young Ralston showed that he'd learned something of Mountie steel from his reading and respectfully held his ground. Their compromise was this: Ralston would get a medical degree from Germany's famous Heidelberg University. If, after that, he persisted in his dream, his father would make no objection.

On graduating from Heidelberg, Seeley returned home at once and presented himself as a candidate for the Mountie Academy. He passed the stiff battery of physical and academic tests with flying colors. But to his astonishment, his application was rejected because of a regulation that said a Mountie could not have a saber scar. Seeley had belonged to a Heidelberg student dueling club and sported a fine memento of that membership across his left cheekbone.

Seeley appealed his case to a special R.C.M.P. board of review, but the ruling was upheld. Ralston Seeley could never become a Mountie. As he left the hearing room, his love for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police contorted itself into a deep and implacable hatred. Then and there, he resolved to emigrate to the United States, from where he would dedicate his life to harming and humiliating the Force however he could.

Ocean City, Maryland, is hot and crowded in late July. The morning street was a parade of men, women, and children whose angry red backs, outlandish shorts, halters, hats, and cumbersome beach gear marked them as vacationers, all Boardwalk-bound. Against this tide came a large, ruddy-faced man with a trim moustache and wearing a blue bowling shirt with *I'd Rather Be Playing Miniature Golf* printed on the back. Acting Sergeant Maynard Bullock was working undercover.

Up ahead beyond the Pizza Hut, and towering over McDonald's golden arches, stood his destination, the immense statue of a Mountie with arms akimbo and Stetson at a rakish angle. The goggle-eyed monstrosity wore an immense grin, with a tip of the tongue tucked high up in one corner, and sported a scar on the left cheekbone. Bullock gritted his teeth and, passing under the archway formed by the giant bowlegged blue breeks, crossed the Mountie Burger parking lot.

The Mountie Burger was Ralston Seeley's doing. Using skills

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learned at his father's knee, he launched a new fast-food concept. And, like pet rock, like smurf, like lava-light, the bowlegged blue breeks caught the popular imagination. Overnight, giant Mountie caricatures were going up across the United States, each a gaudy, grotesque fire at which Seeley warmed the hands of his vengeance.

Bullock entered the Mountie Burger by a back door. He changed into a T-shirt printed to look like a Mountie tunic and a small cardboard Stetson held on with an elastic chin band. Sour-eyed, he examined himself in the mirror and, as he had for the last ten mornings, he wished he was where he belonged, vacationing with good old Mavis, his wife, at their cabin on Black Fly Lake. Then on the stroke of eleven, Ramon, the morning short-order man, left and Bullock took his place at the grill.

It wasn't long before the loudspeaker squawked and the counter girl's voice said, "One Commissioner in a poncho." Bullock set about assembling the order. The regular Mountie Burger was called a Constable. Two rashers of bacon made it a Corporal, and so on up through the ranks, adding patties and rashers until you got to Commissioner—which was two patties, three rashers, and a slice of baloney. "In a poncho" meant with a slice of cheese.

As he set things sizzling, he heard a loud, uncomfortable voice say, "No, just black coffee for me, Miss. I don't eat much when I'm out and about, eh." The "out and about" was uttered "oot and aboot" in finest Canadian style. By godfrey, Seeley's fallen into the trap! thought Bullock, so surprised he almost dropped the slice of baloney on the floor. But when he looked out the food slot, he saw it wasn't Seeley. It was, speak of the devil, his nibs, R.C.M.P. Commissioner McNaughton himself.

Chewing thoughtfully on his moustache, Bullock assembled the tall hamburger, holding it together with two long toothpicks topped with little Canadian flags, and sent it through the food slot. Then he went over and looked out the window in the kitchen door. The restaurant was almost empty. McNaughton was sitting at a corner table with a little girl Bullock recognized as Dolly, his granddaughter, the apple of his eye. While she devoured the burger, McNaughton puzzled over his road map.

Bullock took a deep breath, pushed the door open, and crossed to the table. "Food okay, neighbor?" he asked in his version of a loud American voice. But in that complicated language of hand signs which only the Mounties know, he was signaling, It's Acting Ser-

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geant Bullock, Commissioner. I'm down here undercover on the Bounding Mane business.

A month ago, when the Force's famed Musical Ride was performing at Toronto's Maple Leaf Gardens, a Gypsy fortuneteller with kerchief, bangles, and saber scar had been amusing the Mountie sentries in the stable facilities when suddenly she sprang onto the back of Bounding Mane, the last of the Mounts of the Mounted line. Bounding Mane, whose photograph hung in every grade-school classroom in Canada, galloped out of the building and escaped the city, using side streets. Hoof tracks led the Mounties as far as the border, beyond which they had no mandate to pursue.

Aloud McNaughton said, "Everything's hunky-dory, chef." But his hand signs said, Fill me in, Acting Sergeant.

A bunch of us have given up vacation time to come down and cover as many of Seeley's Mountie Burger outlets as we can, signaled Bullock. He inspects them regularly. Sooner or later he'll show up and lead one of us back to Bounding Mane. Out loud he said, "Need help with that road map?"

"All I can get," said McNaughton, giving Dolly quarters and aiming her at the *Pin the Laser on the Mountie* electronic game. Then, with a "Take a load off," he nodded Bullock into her chair and whispered, "I'm behind you people a hundred percent. Unofficially, of course. Let's not start a war. If we won, it'd be two in a row and they might make us take possession." They both laughed quietly. This was a Canadian joke.

"What brings you here, sir?" asked Bullock.

"Got a special invitation for Dolly and me to the famous pony roundup in Chincoteague. I guess the Chamber of Commerce wanted to add a Mountie luster to the event. You know about the roundup?"

Bullock nodded. "This small breed of horses runs wild on Assateague Island right across the bay here. The island's about thirty miles long. Once a year, they're rounded up and made to swim this narrow channel—" he tapped the road map to show the place "—between the southern tip of Assateague over to Chincoteague Island on the land side. They auction off some foals and horses to support the local fire company." Bullock paused and looked at McNaughton. What he'd meant to ask was what an R.C.M.P. Commissioner was doing in a Mountie Burger.

McNaughton folded up the road map. "Well, I guess you're wondering what the heck an R.C.M.P. Commissioner's doing in a Mountie Burger," he said a bit sheepishly. "You see, the whole way down

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the Delmarva Peninsula, little Dolly there was singing this song about beer bottles hanging on the wall. By George, she knows her numbers. By the Virginia border, I was close to speaking sharply to her for the first time ever. Then I got a brainstorm.

" 'Dolly,' I said, 'what say we stop for lunch early? You get to pick the place.' That bought me some blessed peace while she studied all the roadside signs. Just before the Ocean City turnoff, she saw the Mountie Burger billboard."

Bullock nodded. " 'If Your Tummy Can't Go Far, Drive in at the Mountie with the Scar.' "

McNaughton nodded back. "So here's where we had to come," he said. Then he rose and, shaking Bullock's hand, said, "Good luck in your endeavor, Bullock." Then his face turned thoughtful. "Bullock? Bullock? Aren't you the one who slammed the limousine door on the Prime Minister's hand?"

When Bullock's shift ended, he went over to Golfeteria, the miniature golf course next door to the Mountie Burger. He counted himself lucky to have such a fine off-duty observation post to watch for Seeley. He'd kind of hoped to get a "Lucky dog!" from Inspector McMinn by casually mentioning his miniature golf course during his phone call to announce he was on station. But there was a miniature golf course next to the Mountie Burger in Omaha, too, and McMinn was already buddy-buddy with a Mr. Knee-High, the night manager.

Yes, the jock Mounties with their nude ice hockey might get the headlines, but for those on the Force of more intellectual persuasion, miniature golf remained the game of choice. In fact, at the recent International Police Olympics in the old Devil's Island facility, the Mountie miniature golf team crushed the Spanish Guardia Civil and the French Surete before edging out the reigning champions—Vatican City's Swiss Guards, whose brief geography had made them masters of the game. (By godfrey, Bullock almost envied them their Michelangelo uniforms, except for those helmets that looked like fancy-dan Turkish bob skates.)

Marco MacGregor had brought miniature golf back to Scotland from China in 1230 along with the recipe for haggis. (The Scots had immediately diluted the game with space to make it last longer and in this extended, corrupted form the game is most widely played today.) Though he rarely played miniature golf himself, Bullock was drawn by the finesse and strategy of the game. Here in the spec-

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tators' gallery of the Ocean City course, Bullock made the acquaintance of another enthusiast, Mr. Theo Necropolis, a stooped and wrinkled old gentleman in a white hat with a transparent green window set in the front of the brim. They talked long and often about the carom and windmill theory, the glory days of the game when you could putt the continent without leaving a miniature golf course, or how the game's decline paralleled that of the whooping crane, whose natural habitat those courses had become.

Necropolis was in miniature-golf supplies. "You know," he said, "green indoor-outdoor carpet remnants and used golf balls I buy from high-school kids. It's kind of a class project. Many a prom and yearbook's been financed by my young people raiding golf-course water traps in the dead of night. Old putters I pick up at yard sales but I don't deal in 'wraparounds.' " This last, Bullock knew, referred to putters bent around trees by angry golfers, which the unscrupulous straightened for resale. "It's not much of a living, but every now and then I get to put somebody in the way of a regulation-size, five-foot windmill." Then he brightened. "Hey, do you know who makes the windmills?"

"The Dutch?" ventured Bullock.

"The Greeks," said Necropolis proudly.

Yes, the old man was an even bigger fan of the game than Bullock was. At midnight, when the Mountie Burger closed and Bullock went to catch some shuteye, Necropolis would stay on, talking to Tiny, the manager, or watching the shifty street characters who seemed to draw strength from a late-night game and were masters of the difficult windmill shot.

Today, as soon as he saw Bullock, Necropolis said, "Hey, your guy just left."

Figuring two pairs of eyes were better than one, Bullock had asked the old man to watch out for a man with a saber scar and a Canadian accent, saying the guy owed him money. Had his little white lie paid off? "Which way did he go?" demanded Bullock.

Necropolis shook his hands to show it was too late for that. "He was sitting here watching the play," he said. "When I saw the scar, I moseyed over casuallike and started talking about miniature golf. Well, sir, I soon had him 'ooting' and 'abooting' all over the place. And he's loaded, too, because finally he looked at me and said, 'I count myself a good judge of character, Mr. Necropolis. Would you like to make a quick thousand bucks?'

" 'Who do I have to kill?' sez I. Well, he took that in the comical

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way it was intended and explained how he had to deliver a horse to a Mr. Emerson down in Chincoteague tomorrow. He said he'd pay me the money to drive the horse down Assateague Island and in the back way. See, the East Coast horse dealers get together down there during pony roundup to show off their choice stock. To hear him tell it, his eye for horseflesh is so sharp that whatever he bids for, so do all the other dealers. So he'd got a mind to sneaking down in a rental car and doing his bidding in a disguise. But he still had this delivery to make, and if anyone saw his truck and horse trailer it'd give the show away. He said he'd meet me on the bridge between Assateague and Chincoteague in a fake beard and give me the thousand there."

By godfrey, thought Bullock, a Canadian with a scar and a horse. The animal had to be Bounding Mane! His luck was changing. He wasn't going to be Bullock who closed the limousine door on the P.M.'s hand any more. He was going to be Bullock who found Bounding Mane and brought Ralston Seeley to justice. But then he frowned. "You took him up on the offer, right?"

"I told him to call me here in an hour. But I may have to give him the big no-can-do. That sand-dune driving's bad enough, but Assateague's a national park and those Park Rangers can be real tough when it comes to unauthorized vehicles. They're your hard-core ecologists. I've heard tell of them pistol-whipping people just for looking crosseyed at a nesting sapsucker and then covering it up by saying you were attacked by a grizzly. So I'm not sure I want to mess with the Park Rangers—not unless I can partner up with somebody who can lay his hands on a Mountie uniform fast."

As it happened, Bullock was one of those Mounties who bring their uniforms everywhere, even on undercover assignments. He cleared his throat. "What the heck's the uniform for?"

The next morning at the appointed time, Bullock was standing in the Mountie Burger parking lot in full regalia, scarlet tunic and all. Soon a four-wheel-drive pickup pulling a horse trailer paused at the curb with Necropolis stooped over the steering wheel. Before getting in, Bullock went around back and looked inside the trailer. It was Bounding Mane, all right. "It's me, boy!" he said. "You're safe now!" The horse whinnied doubtfully.

Then the old man drove them out of town and southward the few miles to the causeway that took them to Assateague Island. It was another mile of sand dunes, salt grass, and scrub pine to the park's Visitors' Center. At a barrier across the road stood two women and

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a man in Stetsons and drab Park Ranger uniforms with automatic weapons. A sign said PARK CLOSED FOR RENOVATIONS. Beyond the barrier, more armed rangers were formed into ranks around a map on an easel.

Necropolis suggested that perhaps they'd come at a bad time. But it was too late to turn back. Bullock stepped from the pickup, pulled down the skirts of his tunic, ran a knuckle through his moustache, and marched forward. The rangers at the barrier watched him come with uncertain, admiring eyes.

"I am Park Ranger Inspector-General Bullock," Maynard announced and was gratified when they came to attention. The barrier rose and Bullock was escorted over to the senior ranger at the easel, a shapely honey-blonde who raised two fingers to the brim of her Stetson and introduced herself. "Thank you, Ranger Wayves," said Bullock as he looked around. "You seem a bit overstaffed. Were you warned of this little surprise inspection?"

"Operation Nip-in-the-Bud, sir."

"Ah," said Bullock wisely. "Proceed, Ranger."

Ranger Wayves turned to the map of Assateague on the easel and used a pointer to indicate a location on the ocean side. "Charlie will have to land here," she said. "His objective, the marsh figwort growths here and here. We will allow Charlie to move inland. Then unit one will cut him off from his boats. Simultaneously, units two and three will open fire. Charlie will only have two routes of escape, here into the quicksand or here into the minefield."

Bullock cleared his throat. "That Charlie sure does give us a lot of bother, eh?"

"The Ladies' Wildflower League of Smerna, Delaware, sir," said Ranger Wayves, her grey eyes flashing now. "We'll make them an example their kind won't soon forget." Then she added with great feeling, "Would you lead us, sir?"

As Necropolis pulled up beside him right on cue, Bullock said, "For now, these quicky inspections are the best I can do, accompanied by my old trusty retainer here and Yellowstone, my faithful steed." He smiled grandly and got inside the pickup. "Carry on, Ranger Wayves."

But the woman came to the pickup window. "Call me Amber, sir," she asked breathlessly. Then she reached in and touched his tunic with her fingertips. "Will this be our new uniform, sir? It makes my knees weak."

"Mine, too, Amber," admitted Bullock . . .

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The sandy jeep trail ran close to the ocean side through a landscape of bayberry bushes, marsh grass, dunes, and more scrub pine. After the first few miles, Bullock wondered out loud if they shouldn't do something about Nip-in-the-Bud—what, he didn't know. Necropolis expressed other worries. "Where are the wild horses and the Park Rangers?" he wondered.

"Aren't the horses all rounded up by now?"

"Only those down on the Virginia end of the island make the Chincoteague swim," explained the old man. "I sure hope Wayves hasn't pulled off her people for Nip-in-the-Bud." Frowning, he scanned the horizon with a worried eye.

They drove in silence for several miles. Then Necropolis stopped the pickup. "Listen," he said.

Bullock thought he heard a noisy airplane engine. He stuck out his head and looked skyward. An old World War I Prentiss-Jenkins Hedgehog, a biplane with two open cockpits, lumbered across the sky trailing a banner that read: ASK FOR RALPH BRAND DOG FOOD. YOUR MUTTS DO.

"Oh, brother, let's get out of here!" shouted Necropolis. As they picked up speed and bounced down the road, he added, "You hear talk when you travel around in miniature golf supplies, talk like maybe Ralph, the Dog Food Man, was going to move against the Assateague ponies. Maybe that Smerna Wildflower business was a setup. We'll never get to Chincoteague if we get caught up in one of Ralph's operations!"

Just then, through the old man's window, Bullock saw three small spotted horses emerge from behind a dune, followed by a rider wearing jeans, a homburg hat, and the navy-pinstriped vest to what must once have been an expensive three-piece suit. Then came more horses and a rider wearing a battered shako which Bullock's browsings in *Jane's Uniforms and Insignia of the World* told him was that of a West Point senior classman, a tragic shako that never got to be tossed in the air at graduation because its owner had washed out in his final year.

"Your regular horse wrangler wouldn't be seen dead working for Ralph," explained Necropolis. "He uses the dregs of Madison Avenue, ex-politicians fresh from the slammer, defrocked clergy, and the like. But don't underrate them. Grinding beautiful horses into dog food can destroy whatever small virtues are left in a man." He looked in the sideview mirror. "More trouble," he said.

Bullock leaned out the window. A Land Rover had appeared on

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the road behind them and was closing fast. When they'd done a thousand yards, the road turned sharply inland and a second Land Rover blocked their path. Sitting on the hood, a bare-chested man wearing a dirty clerical collar used an automatic weapon to wave them off onto a trail through a stand of tall sea-oats. Almost at once they emerged onto a sandy slope leading down to the bay shore, where a tug with a barge lay at anchor. Below them were half a dozen wild horses in a large corral made of rope and oil drums. Men were running everywhere to handle the new arrivals.

The Land Rover following them pulled up on Bullock's side and he felt the muzzle of a pistol behind his ear, and conveyed to Necropolis the orders to stop next to the rustlers at the corral entrance.

A large man, a morbidly fat man with an immense nose and protruding eyes, waddled over as they were dragged from the pickup. He wore a vast butcher's apron with a bloody middle and the name *Ralph* written in cursive script across his heart. Prodding Bullock in the stomach with the butt of an ugly horsewhip, he snarled, "Looks like we got us a leg up on a batch of Ralph's Select Dobie Nuggets."

Before Bullock could answer, a rustler found Bounding Mane. "Hey, boss!" he shouted, leading the animal out of the trailer.

"The more the merrier," answered the fat man. "Put the critter in with the others."

"That horse is the property of the Canadian government," warned Bullock sternly.

"Mutts can't tell the difference," said Ralph, the Dog Food Man.

Here Necropolis broke his captors' grip. "Leave that horse alone!" he shouted, and tried to fight his way back to where Bounding Mane struggled to get free. Ralph struck the old man down with the butt of his whip, but somehow at that moment Bounding Mane ducked out of his halter and, avoiding all the arms reaching for him, vanished over a sand dune.

In the confusion, Bullock broke loose from his captors, too. Cocking his fists, he struck the Mountie Academy fighting stance with left out and right circling the jaw deceptively. "You! Ralph!" he cried. The fat man turned. But two men grabbed Bullock from behind and the West Point failure and the guy in the clerical collar lunged at him from the front.

Suddenly it was the movie scene Bullock had always wanted to play, the one only the good guy got to do. He threw his weight back onto the two men holding him from behind and cocked his feet in

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the air. Now he would strike out sharply, kicking the lunging men in their solar plexuses. But "solar plexuses" didn't sound right. He hesitated over the plural for a fraction of a second too long. The two men holding him released their grip and Maynard slammed down hard onto the sand. His attackers grabbed his ankles and dragged him over to their chief.

Ralph looked down at Bullock. "You're dog food, mister," he said, and kicked the Mountie on the side of the head.

When Bullock regained consciousness, the sun had moved in the sky, the corral was full of wild horses, and the men were assembling a ramp up to the barge. He found himself in the shade of the pickup, sitting back to back with Necropolis, their hands tied together behind them. Five feet away, the rustler in the pinstriped vest was leaning against a Land Rover, keeping watch over them. Necropolis whispered, "Glad to have you back, Maynard. I've started on the knots. They'll be child's play. Then—"

Ralph's arrival interrupted him. "Get these two down to the barge," the fat man ordered the guard. As Bullock and Necropolis were pulled to their feet, they heard a muffled explosion in the distance, and then another. Ralph saw Bullock's wondering look. "The Ladies' Wildflower League of Smerna, Delaware, are tiptoeing through the mine field," he explained with a terrible smile.

"It wasn't just a story you planted, then?" demanded Bullock.

"Why go with a rumor when it's no sweat to pull off the real thing?" said Ralph as more explosions sounded. "My old lady's league president. Hell, the first explosion was probably her." As Bullock sputtered indignantly, the fat man shrugged. "Look, being married to Ralph, the Dog Food Man, wasn't much of a life for her, anyway, right?" He stopped, his attention riveted on a high dune above the corral.

There, silhouetted against the sky, stood Bounding Mane, observing the scene below him. The stallion snorted, whinnied loudly, reared on his hind legs, and whinnied again. The wild horses in the pen heard the call, answered it, and began to churn around in the corral. Rustlers came running from all sides to get the situation under control. Suddenly, Bounding Mane, hair streaming out behind him and nostrils quivering, came galloping down from the dune, followed by two dozen wild horses he'd recruited to his cause.

Ralph cursed and he and the guard charged down the slope while Bounding Mane and his band made havoc around the corral, tipping

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over the barrels and tearing down the saddle horses' picket line. Now horses, wild and tame, were streaming off in all directions. By the time Ralph reached the scene, only Bounding Mane remained, fighting a successful rear-guard action preventing the rustlers from pursuing the freed animals.

Snapping his horsewhip in the air left and right, Ralph approached Bounding Mane with the nimble Dance-of-Death grace of the morbidly fat. His exhausted henchmen fell back. It was now the horse against their leader.

The malice in the fat man's eye was matched by the horse's stout determination. Then Ralph sprang forward with the whip and struck Bounding Mane across the shoulder. The horse, which had never felt the lash, stopped dead in his tracks as if too shocked to move. Instantly, six large men flung themselves on Bounding Mane's hindquarters, holding the horse fast. Then, as Bullock remembered it, Ralph shouted, "Blankety-blank you, you blanking horse from blankety-blank hell!" Raising his whip again and flanked by a man carrying a halter, the fat man approached the horse from the front.

Necropolis had freed Bullock's hands by then. The Mountie cupped them around his mouth and shouted, "Bounding Mane, the solar plexuses, the solar plexuses!" The horse looked up as though he did not understand. Suddenly the right plural came to Bullock. "The solar plexi!" he shouted. Now the horse understood. With quickness and surgical delicacy, Bounding Mane shot out both front hooves and struck Ralph and the halter holder square in the solar plexi. Before their bodies hit the sand, Bounding Mane had shaken free and vanished over the dune, following the wild horses of Assateague and the rustlers' saddle horses.

With the keys from the ignitions of the Land Rovers in his pocket, Bullock jumped into the moving pickup with Necropolis behind the wheel. As the truck and tottering horse trailer topped the rise, Bullock looked back at the scene down on the beach. The rustlers were standing around in the wreckage of their corral awaiting the fat man's orders. But Ralph, the Dog Food Man, having managed to prop himself up on one elbow, was too busy flourishing his horsewhip and making a vow to heaven.

"We got to find that horse to get our money," said Necropolis as the pickup regained the jeep trail.

Bullock scanned the horizon. A Mountie horse tended to head

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north. But Bounding Mane might figure Ralph knew that. "South," he said.

Necropolis turned the steering wheel. "Say," he asked after they'd driven a mile or two, "how come you knew the horse's name back there?"

"I'm afraid I haven't been straight with you, old timer," said Bullock. "I'm no lowly grill man. I'm Acting Sergeant Maynard Bullock of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police." Then he told of his mission to rescue Bounding Mane and his plan to bring Seeley to justice.

"Does this mean I don't get my money?"

"If this works out," said Bullock, "the youth of Canada will mail you enough nickels and dimes to make you rich beyond your wildest dreams."

They drove on until they found one of the saddle horses, its reins tangled in the branches of a driftwood log. Bullock got out and approached the horse, stroking its neck and freeing the reins. Then he swung up into the saddle and gave the horse its head.

It set off at once for an area of marshland to the south. Necropolis followed as best he could in the pickup. Herons, egrets, and wood ducks fled into the air as the rider passed. After a few minutes' ride, they came to a sign that said they had passed into Virginia and the Chincoteague Wildlife Refuge.

Beyond more marshland, the ground began to rise until they entered a tall grove of pines. Suddenly, there in a clearing soft with pine needles stood Bounding Mane with a pretty piebald mare by his side and the wild horses of Assateague and the saddle horses at his back.

Bullock called the horse to him. The horse whinnied sharply and shook his head. Bullock dismounted and came forward with an understanding smile. "I know. I know, old boy," said Bullock. "You'd like to stay here with your lovely lady and your newfound friends. I can appreciate that. We're both wild, untamed things. But we've let civilization put its harness on us. It's made us symbols of law and order. On top of all that, you're the last of a line made immortal by Alberta Regina de la Quebec. Revert to the wild and you'll break the hearts of thousands of young readers."

Bounding Mane heard these words but stood his ground. Trying another tack, Bullock said, "We're a team, you and I, the Mountie and his mount. You've got a maple leaf emblazoned on your flank and so do I." He made double quotation marks with his fingers to

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show that in his own case he spoke figuratively. "You need us and we need you. Heck," he said, keeping a straight face while spreading it on pretty thick, "when you come right down to it, maybe the Mounties need you more than you need them."

Bounding Mane cocked his head around at the horses and, Bullock would swear to his dying day, shrugged helplessly. Then the animal trotted over to him.

They walked away together, Bounding Mane crunching a lump of maple sugar he had found in the right-hand, maple-sugar pocket of the Mountie's tunic. Out of the corner of his eye, Bullock saw the saddle horse he rode up on trot over and nuzzle the piebald mare's ear. "No, don't look back, old fellow," he warned when Bounding Mane started to turn. "Remember, the Mountie always gets his man but seldom gets the girl." He walked on in thoughtful silence until they caught up with Necropolis.

The old man had passed them while they'd been in the grove and was parked before a gate in the road about two hundred yards farther south. "Shall we load up or, hey, do you want to arrest the Seeley guy on horseback?" he said.

By godfrey, wouldn't that be a kick, thought Bullock, smiling to himself—arresting Seeley in full uniform and astride Bounding Mane. That'd sure give the Mountie locker room something to talk about. Out loud he said, "Saddle him up." Then he brushed off his uniform and took a kink out of the Stetson brim.

Still smiling, he vaulted into the saddle. Suddenly he heard a sound that took him back to his Mountie Academy days. In Makeup and Disguise, they'd shown them the old trick of turning yourself into a stooped-over codger by buttoning a fly button to the middle buttonhole on your shirt. Every time a superior entered the class, all the Mountie cadets would snap to attention and the buttons would sail across the classroom and rattle against the wall. Bullock had just heard a button bounce off the pickup. Turning in the saddle, he found Necropolis, wigless and erect now, aiming a pistol at him as he stripped latex wrinkles from his left cheekbone to reveal a saber scar. "You?" cried Bullock in astonishment.

At Ralston Seeley's whistle, a very short man rode out from behind the gate, leading a saddle horse. "Squirt here runs my Chincoteague operation," said Seeley, mounting up. Squirt leaned over and took Bullock's reins.

The three rode through the gate and onto a wide road circling a large area of marshland . . .

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Bullock needed a plan, a way to save Bounding Mane. Up ahead, he saw the clump of trees beside the road and knew what he had to do. To put Seeley off his guard, he asked, "Great job on the accent. How the heck did you get rid of it?"

The shadow of a terrible memory crossed Seeley's brow. It was several minutes before he spoke. Then he said, "Among the crack houses and porno shops of Manhattan are these dark Berlitzlike places run by Canadians who dare never go home again. If you've got the cash, they'll follow you around in teams sixteen hours a day and make you talk, talk, talk. Every time you say 'oot,' 'aboot,' or 'eh' they pummel you with rolled-up newspapers. A week of that'll kill you or cure you."

They had reached the clump of trees. In one sudden motion, Bullock grabbed the reins from a startled Squirt, kicked Bounding Mane forward with his heels, and hurled himself sideways into the trees with all his might. He could get shot as he dodged away among the tree trunks, but at least Bounding Mane would escape back to the wild herd. But something went wrong. The hurling-himself-out-of-the-saddle-into-the-trees part didn't work. In an instant, Squirt grabbed Bullock firmly around the waist, stopping Bounding Mane's forward progress.

"Wonderful, these modern glues," said Seeley with a gloatful smile. "Yes, you're glued to the saddle, old man. There's food for thought."

With a sudden, laboring roar, Ralph's Prentiss-Jenkins Hedgehog appeared, skimming the tops of the trees. The Dog Food Man sat out on the fuselage back behind the pilot, his fat calves stuffed down into the rear cockpit, a wing strut in each hand and the horsewhip between his teeth. "The plot thickens," said Seeley as he watched the plane disappear behind the trees. Then he spurred his horse to a canter and the other two followed.

They rode on quickly across low country spotted with clumps of trees and pools of water. Sika deer and white-tail sprang from their path and birds rose out of the grass. Bullock could hear tatters of noises now, merry-go-round music and the blare of loudspeakers blown to them on the wind.

"By the way," said Seeley, "do you know Commissioner McNaughton was on the board of review that turned down my application for the Mountie Academy? Oh, he was only a superintendent then. The other members of the panel wanted to waive the saber-scar rule and accept me into the Academy, I could tell. But Mc-

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Naughton sat there like God Almighty, and when it came his turn to speak he said: 'If a saber scar, why not a monocle?' I saw the other faces fall and knew my application was doomed."

As he spoke, they emerged from some tall grass and there ahead of them, under the watchful eyes of the village cowboys, were two or three hundred wild horses and foals ready for the quarter-mile swim across the channel to Chincoteague.

"But don't you see McNaughton was right?" insisted Bullock. "After monocles, it'd be heel-clicking, hand-kissing, and dumb steel helmets with those—"

Suddenly the cowboys were shouting and waving their hats. The swim was starting.

The horses took to the water slowly but without fear and swam out strongly between the double row of boats that marked the course. The tide was outgoing and the current slack. Seeley reined in his horse and said, "Here will do nicely, Squirt."

As the small man dismounted, Seeley said, "When it comes to tourists, this pony roundup's good for two days max. But my Mountie Burger and Golfeteria operation pulls in people all year round. So the Chamber of Commerce loves me enough to let me stage a little advertising stunt during this year's swim. Or at least that's what they think you're doing here." Seeley smiled at Bullock. "Even with a late start, a horse like Bounding Mane would finish a swim like this out in front, right?"

"He sure would," agreed Bullock proudly.

"Then picture this," said Seeley. "There's McNaughton and his granddaughter sitting in the VIP bleachers as that first horse reaches shore. What Mountie Commissioner, what Canadian schoolgirl wouldn't recognize Bounding Mane? Hurrah, the lost Mount of the Mounted has been found! But hold it. Isn't that a drowned Mountie hanging there upside down under Bounding Mane?"

"Over my dead body!" swore Bullock.

"Heads up, then," advised Seeley and gave Bullock a gentle push. Squirt must have loosened the cinch a notch, for Bullock toppled over, slid down Bounding Mane's side, and came to a stop beneath the animal, hanging upside down from the saddle. "Will that terrible sight and his granddaughter's hysteria trigger McNaughton's fatal apoplectic fit, I wonder? Or will the shameful discovery of a half a million dollars' worth of cocaine in your saddlebags and headlines like MOUNTIE DROWNS IN DRUG SMUGGLING TRY drive McNaughton to blow his brains out?"

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Through this, Bullock struggled to right himself by frantically pulling the cinch down with both hands, hoping to hoist himself up onto the horse's back. Seeley looked down at this futile effort with mild interest. "I guess you know they confiscate cars, planes, and boats used for smuggling. But not many know smugglers' horses get sold to Ralph, the Dog Food Man. Good old Ralph W., he's the Mr. Emerson you're going to deliver Bounding Mane to!" Looking pleased with himself, Seeley slapped Bounding Mane on the rump.

During the dash to the water, it took sharp reflexes and head bobbing on Bullock's part to avoid the landscape. Then he had just enough time to grab a deep breath before Bounding Mane was swimming deep in the channel current.

When the initial shock of the water had passed, Bullock set himself to getting out of this little pickle. He'd watched a TV show on the Eskimo and how they righted a capsized kayak. As he remembered it, the trick was all in the hip action. But by the time he got it right in his head, his lungs were bursting—he'd only have enough air for one try. He gave it his best hip shot. Nothing happened. He was a goner. Goodbye, good old Mavis, dear.

Suddenly, as though he understood what Bullock had been trying to do, Bounding Mane duplicated the hip action and swung Bullock and saddle up onto his back. Bullock's head and shoulders broke the surface. He found himself in the midst of a herd of giant sea horses, with their strong necks and handsome heads out of the water, their nostrils flared and ears flatted while beneath the surface mighty tails drove them forward. Bullock saw the cheering boats and heard the roar of the crowd on shore. But he hadn't thought to grab Bounding Mane around the neck and his weight carried him across the horse's back and down the other side. He ended up back under the horse where he'd started.

Expecting Bounding Mane to flip him up again, he waited confidently, arms crossed, marshaling his breath with care. Hanging upside down really sharpened the old wits. Bullock was mulling over the fact that Greeks built the miniature golf windmills when a variation on the classic Canadian riddle "Who's buried in Sir John A. MacDonald's tomb?" popped into his head: "Why is a miniature-golf windmill like a Trojan Horse?" The answer: "Because the Greeks built it." Was it only the silliness of oxygen deprivation that made the riddle and answer seem important?

At last, and not a second too soon, Bounding Mane repeated the hip action. Bullock broke the surface again, grabbed the horse

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around the neck, and hung on for dear life. By godfrey, Bounding Mane was out in front by four lengths! That was why he'd been left hanging there so long. The animal had been making his move through the pack. A hundred yards ahead, the crowds on the shore were cheering and clicking their camera shutters.

Bounding Mane's hooves found bottom now. Then Bullock's shoulders and body were out of the water. In the next moment horse and rider were on the shore. Bullock sat tall and straight in the saddle and thrust out his jaw. As Bounding Mane galloped forward between the cheering spectators, Bullock's now steely gaze picked out an astonished McNaughton and his granddaughter standing in the VIP bleachers. By godfrey, this had to be the proudest moment of his career.

As he galloped past the R.C.M.P. Commissioner, Bullock did a smart eyes-left and saluted. Of course he shouldn't have, for the salute was just enough to tip his delicate balance atop Bounding Mane and he and the saddle swung back down beneath the horse. The last thing Bullock remembered was that he'd forgotten "Heads up!"

Bullock awoke with an aching head and lay there, staring up at the jail-cell ceiling. Then a voice said, "I'm Agent Loomis."

Bullock turned his head and saw a man with hard blue eyes and a crisp tan suit standing at the bars. "Bullock, R.C.M.P.," he said, swinging his feet off the cot and trying to stand up. He almost fell. Something terrible had happened to his legs. They were a good foot shorter than they should be. Then he looked down and discovered the saddle was still stuck to his breeks.

"Getting that off's going to be more than the local facilities can handle," predicted Loomis. "The glue's gone through to the skin." Then he said, "Yeah, we've heard about you down here, Bullock. You slam limousine doors on Prime Ministers' hands. You deal in drugs. Your Commissioner's on the phone to Washington right now trying to save that horse from the Dog Food Man. It won't do him any good. Policy's policy."

Bullock waddled over to the bars. "Look, Ralston Seeley planted those drugs. He's a major distributor. He uses his Golfeteria outlets. Don't ask me how."

Loomis shook his head. "Seeley's become very important people down here, spreading money around in all the right places. Talk says he'll be the next Secretary of the Interior, with big plans to

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smarten up the Park Rangers. No, we've had our eye on the Golfeterias. They're owned by a guy called Necropolis. We've raided a couple of outlets but came up dry. Once we sweated one of his night managers with a drug record, a sawed-off shotgun of a runt called Tommy Thumb. But he wouldn't break."

"Good godfrey, that's it!" said Bullock. Then he started counting on his fingers. "Tommy Thumb, Squirt, Tiny, and Mr. Knee-High. Seeley needed them short to work inside the windmills." When Agent Loomis raised an interested eyebrow, Bullock started to pace bowleggedly, one index finger pointing skyward and the other cradling his chin thoughtfully.

"Believe me," he said, "Seeley and Necropolis are the same guy. Suppose he sells these specially marked golfballs to his dealers. That way they can't get caught holding much and a fresh supply's just a putt away. When a marked ball pops inside the windmill, the night manager switches it for one filled with cocaine and drops it out the other side." Bullock wagged his forefinger. "But even as we speak, Seeley's—" But when he turned, Loomis was already out the door.

Bullock frowned. Right now Seeley would be making his escape, riding hellbent for leather back up Assateague Island. He had to be stopped. "Hey, guard!" shouted Bullock. "I've still got my one phone call coming!"

Bullock got his call. Ranger Wayves answered the Visitors' Center phone at the top of Assateague Island. His voice turned husky when Inspector-General Bullock identified himself, described Seeley, and ordered her to arrest him when he tried to leave the island.

By godfrey, the story she told him was one he'd treasure for Mountie campfires. She said they'd been out dumping the bodies of the killed Smerna ladies into the quicksand. Pounding hoofbeats approached, and suddenly Seeley came barreling over a dune on a horse lathered with sweat. The horse foundered deep in the quicksand, and before Seeley knew what was happening he was up to his waist and sinking fast.

Amber stretched herself out atop the hellish mud and had the others grab her ankles and push her toward Seeley, who was chest-deep in the quicksand and screaming with fear. When her reach fell short of Seeley's outstretched arm, she held out her Stetson. But instead of grabbing the brim and being pulled to safety, Seeley snatched the hat and put it on. Instantly a strange peace spread across the man's face. He threw back his shoulders, tucked in his

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chin, and gave a bright, boyish smile. And in that instant, so the Park Ranger witnesses swear, the saber scar vanished from his cheek. Then Ralston Seeley, happy in death, slid beneath the surface of the quicksand.

Black Fly Lake was a silver rink in the moonlight among the black trees. A loon uttered its madman's laughter across the water. Bullock lay on his stomach in the porch hammock and mused on life. He'd been able to put a pretty good face on the Chincoteague business, the Golfeteria bust, Bounding Mane's rescue. Perhaps he'd been less than honest in telling good old Mavis that he'd been personally selected to escort Bounding Mane home.

The fact was, Bullock couldn't have survived the trip to Ottawa sitting on that blasted saddle in the back seat of McNaughton's car, so they'd hoisted him up onto the horse's back and buckled the saddle on. Then they'd cut a hole in the horse-trailer roof for his head and shoulders. The trip had been a grim one, with Dolly McNaughton wide-eyed with wonder all the way. This had obliged Bullock to maintain his formal Mountie expression—"fair but relentless"—through sun, rain, and the rush-hour traffic around Syracuse, New York, until his jaw went numb.

At the Mountie laboratory, technicians had buckled him into a sling and lowered him waist-deep into a vat of acetone. After two hours, he'd been lifted out again. Using a device they described as state of the art but which Bullock thought looked like a large version of those keys you open sardine cans with, they had peeled off the saddle, the seat of his breeks, and a goodly portion of his skin in the same vicinity.

By godfrey, he'd wondered, how was he going to explain his injury to good old Mavis? Then suddenly he got a brainstorm. Laughing darkly, he'd told her he'd gotten it escaping from the grip of one of Seeley's tough adherents.

Bullock could hear her in the kitchen cleaning up the last of the dinner dishes. Soon she'd come out and change his dressing and apply the salve. It was no picnic, lying on your stomach. But what was he grousing about? After a couple of bad starts, he'd finally won the day in Chincoteague. You can lose every battle except the last one. The law-and-order business was just like miniature golf. It was an end game all the way.

As if it read his thoughts, that loon on Black Fly Lake called out again across the water.

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THE JURY BOX
by ALLEN J. HUBIN

Quite a variety of things are done with pseudonyms. In some cases, they are used successfully for a time (as with Donald E. Westlake's) or a longer time (as with "K. C. Constantine") to conceal the author's real identity. Sometimes they become so well identified with the author that both bylines are used together (as in "John Creasey writing as Anthony Morton"). In yet other cases, pseudonyms are used so openly from the outset that one might wonder why they are used at all. We begin with some varied examples of pseudonym use.

Any mystery surrounding the identity of "Patrick Ruell" has by now disappeared, and both this pseudonym and the author's real identity as Reginald Hill appear on *Death of a Dormouse* (Mysterious Press, $15.95). This is Hill at the top of his form, with fascinating plot, well developed (and developing) characters, and gripping tension. Trudi Shoesmith was a dutiful and unquestioning wife to up-and-coming husband Trent for twenty-five years, trailing him around Europe as he rose from airline pilot to travel-agency executive. Now they're back in England for a stint, and Trent promptly gets himself killed in a road accident. He leaves Trudi surprisingly little money, no pension or insurance from the agency, and a growing collection of unanswered questions about Trent's job and about the array of his acquaintances who turn up expressing sympathy and other emotions less clear. Read this!

No mystery has ever been made about who "Barbara Vine" is—it's Ruth Rendell. Vine's second appearance is *A Fatal Inversion* (Bantam, $14.95), which explores, at great depth and leisure, the consequences of youthful evil suddenly descending on the participants eleven years later. Adam Verne-Smith unexpectedly inherited a large and secluded house in Suffolk, and, for the summer of 1976 when he was thought to be in Greece by his parents, he and others turned it into a sort of commune, supported by selling off the contents of the building. Now products of that summer have been unearthed from an animal cemetery on the premises by the present owners of the house: the skeletons of a young woman and a baby. The terrors and disintegrations of the present and the events and characters of 1976 are slowly revealed to us, as we wonder who the dead were and how they came to be that way. Much to be savored here, with the most seamless flashback technique I've encountered.

No mystery is also made of the identity of "Gillian Roberts"—it's mainstream novelist Judith Greber, who thus debuts in our field with *Caught Dead in Philadelphia* (Scribners, $16.95). Amanda Pepper is a thirtyish schoolteacher

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who casually beds but has failed to marry, the latter of grave concern to her mother and sister. She has a friend, Lisa, a sometime actress scheduled to marry a ton of old Philadelphia money. Until, that is, she's murdered in Amanda's house. Enter C. K. Mackenzie, police detective, who with reluctance allows Amanda into his heart and the dangers of his bloody case. This is a stylish, wittily observant, and highly enjoyable novel.

"J. W. Rider" is the pseudonym of a bestselling author whose real name remains—at least to me—unknown. He returns with *Hot Tickets* (Arbor House, $16.95), a reprise for Jersey City private investigator Malone. Malone takes only homicide cases, in memory of his mourned and murdered wife. But here, in moments of weakness, he takes on two minor matters with no (apparent) death potential. In one, seminarian Narcissa Sue Samples is having trouble with her boss at the joint where she takes off her clothes for the customers. In the other, a 6'9" wrestler with mobster connections has some threatening letters. But both cases grow unexpectedly bloody, putting Malone in a deadly box with no exit to be seen. This is a tough, absorbing affair, so dense with unconventional language as to be told in dialect.

Suspense and offbeat characters are in good hands in *An Evil Hour* by Jill McGown (St. Martin's, $16.95). Harry Lambert is an ex-cop by virtue of a physical disagreement with a superior officer. Annie Maddox, widow, manages a resort-town hotel and occasionally—and very discreetly—beds Gerald Culver, Member of Parliament. Or did, until Culver was murdered. His widow, discovering Annie's existence, hires Harry to find out if Annie's was the hand that wielded the fatal knife. Harry goes to Amblesea, unaccountably loses his crusted heart, and discovers that violent death is no stranger to the seaside town. What—if anything—links all the dying?

Sam Craven, unemployed journalist with a notable repertoire of one-liners, is the creation of Fleet Street journalist Colin Dune. In *Black Ice* (St. Martin's, $15.95), Craven is induced by a shadowy Intelligence bloke to go to Iceland. That country is key in East-West relations, and the Russians would love to foment enough embarrassment that the Icelanders would toss all Americans off its soil into the frigid North Atlantic. And somehow Solrun—a model, something of an Icelandic national heroine, a lass whom Craven had once loved—is in trouble, mixed up in all of this. So to Reykjavik Craven goes, a small-town Reykjavik full of intrigues, where everybody knows everyone else's business, where some dying is shortly to be done, where facades hide many a dark intention. *Black Ice* is able storytelling and sprints along at a great pace.

Take resolutely improbable if inventive characters and plot, stir in a steady stream of sex, add a body count of which a small war could be proud, and you have *Athena* by the late Franklin Bandy (Tor,

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$15.95). Jonathan Michaelis, a well-to-do professor, was on the jury that acquitted billionairess Athena von Dietrich of the murder of her husband. It later became known that seven of the jurors had been bribed, and Michaelis lost a coveted Washington appointment as a result. He now decides, for the sake of pride if nothing else, to prove that the seven did not include him. So, in unlikely harness with another juror, a wealthy mercenary, he makes the rounds of the remaining ten. Meanwhile, Athena holds the key to her dead father's legacy, an invention which will provide enormous power to the exploiter. Leaches surround her, including the KGB, all consumed with desire for the invention. Downhill action all the way.

The ninth of Martha Grimes' tales of Inspector Richard Jury of Scotland Yard is *The Five Bells and Bladebone* (Little Brown, $15.95). Jury is on holiday, he thinks, in the rural vicinity where lives his friend, the wealthy and voluntarily de-titled Melrose Plant. Out of a piece of antique furniture pops a body, very dead. Jury is naturally asked to help when the corpse proves to be from Watermeadows, a villa which is home to great quantities of money. A writer, Joanna the Mad, who manufactures romance novels, a pub keeper, Melrose's formidable and litigious aunt, a bookseller, an antique dealer, and a pig also notably figure in these proceedings. As does, perhaps, one Sadie Diver, dead of murder in London. A craftily plotted tale, keenly observed, poignant and witty.

Hillary Waugh, with 45 crime novels to his credit, but none in hardcovers in the U.S. since 1980 (at least under bylines I know about), offers *Murder on Safari* (Dodd Mead, $15.95). This is an old-fashioned murder story with old-fashioned romance in a new-fashioned setting, and very welcome it is. James Addison is sent to Kenya on a birdwatcher's safari to write an article for his newspaper. Half the group are from the Cartwright Company, led by its revolting owner and his surpassingly repulsive son. Disquiet descends early on the tour, and the dying begins promptly on arrival in Africa. Also among the travelers is Colonel Dagger, once a detective and successful mystery writer, and his blindingly beautiful daughter. Addison tells the story and Dagger with Kenyan policeman Lamumba do the detecting as the dwindling group motors across the African landscape.

More good paperback reprints are available than I have space to mention. Here is a strong assortment. From Perennial, an octet of Inspector West novels by John Creasey, including *The Gelignite Gang* and *The Case Against Paul Raeburn,* as well as *Skinwalkers* by Tony Hillerman and *No Way Out (The Big Clock)* by Kenneth Fearing ($3.95 each). From Bantam, *The Chief Inspector's Daughter* by Sheila Radley ($3.50). More next issue.

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a *NEW* Rand story by

EDWARD D. HOCH

Perkins was a middle-aged man with sandy hair and moustache. He'd joined the department some eleven years ago, shortly after Rand's retirement. "Did they have these spy games when you were head of Double-C, sir?"

Rand shook his head. "We were too busy with the real thing . . ."

A GAME FOR SPIES

by EDWARD D. HOCH

Cranston knew if he managed to live another two hours that he would cause the death of half the people in London. As he moved unnoticed through the rush-hour crowds in Piccadilly Circus, he tried to remember his exact instructions to the letter. He had avoided the plainclothes police and the M15 people waiting at the hotel, slipping out the service entrance and making his way through the maze of Mayfair back streets to his destination. Now he merely had to avoid capture for two more hours, until he could safely drop the lightbulb in his attache case off the Underground platform at Charing Cross station.

Charing Cross had been chosen after some study, he'd been told, because the air currents there were perfect for spreading the deadly disease germs contained in the lightbulb. The Americans had experimented with something similar some years back, using the New York subways for their test. Cranston, in the employ of a renegade Russian general named Ivanov, had collected the lightbulb filled with virulent bacteria from a research scientist in Reading. That was where M15 had first picked up his trail, but for the moment he'd managed to shake them.

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"After you drop the bulb, walk away quickly and don't take any deep breaths until you're outside," the scientist had instructed him. "Then I'd advise you to get out of London as quickly as possible. The first effects of the illness will appear within twenty-four hours and after that it will spread quickly. An airborne plague is about the worst thing imaginable. There's no stopping it."

He had considered taking the Underground to Charing Cross, one stop away from Piccadilly on the Bakerloo line, but the late-afternoon air was fresh and pleasant. There was also a certain degree of safety in the homebound crowds. He headed down Haymarket toward Pall Mall East. His watch read 5:17. There was still plenty of time before the seven o'clock deadline.

At the foot of Haymarket, his plan suddenly changed. He was intercepted by a brisk young man carrying a trenchcoat over his right arm. "Mr. Cranston, I'll have to ask you to come with me," he said quietly but firmly. "I have a car waiting."

Cranston looked into his eyes and noticed they were blue. "What's the meaning of this? Do you know who I am?"

"Please hand me your attache case, sir. I have a pistol under this coat."

Cranston took a deep breath and raised the case as if to surrender it. Then, as the young man reached out with his left hand, he shoved the edge of the case against the arm with the raincoat. He followed through with a hard shoulder block that sent the man off-balance, toppling to the sidewalk. Cranston sprinted away, losing himself in the crowd of startled onlookers before the man could recover.

He darted down the Underground stairs at Charing Cross but didn't pause there. Instead, he took the first train out, riding to the end of the line at Elephant & Castle, south of the Thames. Even if they knew what he was up to, they had no way of knowing which Underground station he meant to hit. He was betting they wouldn't count on his return to Charing Cross. He had a beer at the pub and then boarded the next northbound train. The time was now 6:05.

This time he stayed on the train past the Charing Cross station, getting off at Oxford Circus where he could transfer to a different line. He rode to Holborn on the Central line, then changed again to the Piccadilly line. He rode that to Green Park, then transferred one last time to the Jubilee line for the return to Charing Cross. It was still only 6:35, but that seemed close enough. He couldn't risk killing much more time. Besides, the rush-hour crowds had thinned out considerably.

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Cranston strode down to the end of the platform, waiting while a train pulled in. When it left, he knew he would have the place to himself for several seconds. He unsnapped the attache case and removed the lightbulb in its protective sleeve. The time was 6:41.

The thunder of the departing train had just died away when another figure appeared in the middle of the platform. "Freeze, Cranston, or you're a dead man!" It was a young woman in sweater and jeans, holding a long-barreled target pistol firmly in both hands.

"You're too late," he yelled back, dropping the lightbulb onto the tracks below. A split-second later he felt her bullet strike him in the chest.

Rand and Hastings sat across the conference table from the three of them—the blue-eyed young man named Trotter, the jeans-clad young woman who was Celia Faraday, and finally Steven Cranston, the front of whose dark-blue suit was still stained with the orange paint from the marker bullet.

"I'm glad this isn't my own suit with paint all over it," he said with a smile, barely concealing his sense of triumph.

The other two were far from despondent. "I found the correct station," Celia Faraday argued. "Ten seconds sooner and I'd have had him before he dropped the bulb. Our team should win points for that."

"How did you know Cranston would be at Charing Cross?" Hastings asked.

"I decoded the message we found in his hotel room. He'd burned it in the ashtray but the ash was all one piece and easy for the laboratory people to read."

Hastings frowned at Cranston. "In the future try to be more careful when burning documents."

"The fact remains that I won," Cranston argued. He was a lean, red-faced man in his forties, who resented being outwitted by department newcomers. "I'd dropped the lightbulb before her bullet struck me."

"This seems to be a matter for Control." Hastings turned to Rand, who was seated quietly at his side. "What do you think?"

As the retired head of Concealed Communications, Rand had been the natural choice to serve as Control, the referee in the week-long tactical spy game between the Red and Blue Squads made up of the regular employees of M15 and Concealed Communications. It was the first time he'd taken part in a game since his retirement and he

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was rather enjoying it. "Each side has a point. The attacking Red Squad led by Mr. Cranston did achieve its objective, but the defending Blues, in the person of Miss Faraday, arrived on the scene in time to take proper action. Cranston was killed by Miss Faraday's excellent marksmanship and immediate measures were taken to neutralize the spread of the disease germs. I award a point to each side and call it a draw."

Celia Faraday allowed herself a smile for the first time as she reached over and shook Trotter's hand. Cranston grumbled a bit about the decision, but finally settled down. Most of the week's spy games had been conducted within the building, with the rival Red and Blue Squads operating out of suites of offices that served as their headquarters. The Lightbulb Battle was one of two scenarios that took the squads into the streets of London. The other, the grand finale of the tactical spy game, would come on Saturday, and was known as The Defector's Run.

When the three had been allowed to depart and rest up for the following morning's events, Rand and Hastings relaxed over coffee and reviewed the day's events. "They're good people," Hastings said. "You can see that for yourself—these three, and Perkins on the Red Squad. They're running quite even in the events so far."

"But there can be only one winner on Saturday."

"That's three days off. How about a late supper?"

Rand shook his head. "I want to call home. I'll probably order something sent up to my hotel room, since Double-C is handling all my expenses."

"You're the perfect man for this job. We should have had you in for the last games."

"I suppose it is a good training exercise," Rand agreed. "Somehow I doubt that even a renegade Russian general named Ivanov would try to kill off half the population of London, though. It sounds more like the plot of one of those best-selling novels that get filmed from time to time."

"I believe you'll find Saturday's session a bit more realistic."

"We've still got tomorrow and Friday to get through."

Rand went back to his hotel room and phoned Leila at home.

"How's it going?" she asked.

"Pretty well today. At least I wasn't bored stiff, judging their skill at deciphering routine messages. I miss you, though."

"Well, you didn't have to agree to act as Control. Will you be home Saturday night?"

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"Wild horses couldn't keep me in London once this thing is over."

Thursday's sessions were fairly ordinary, a game-playing day in which the opposing squads ran imaginary agents in Eastern Europe, moving colored markers around a large-scale map much as the RAF had done during the air battles of World War II. Rand found that Brian Perkins of the Red Squad was quite good at this sort of exercise and when the day's games had ended he sought him out to compliment him. "You're quite skillful there, especially that move you made to encircle the Blues at Sofia."

"Thank you, sir." Perkins was a middle-aged man with sandy hair and moustache. He'd joined the department some eleven years ago, shortly after Rand's retirement. "I try to do my best."

"You and Cranston will be going out for the Red Squad on Saturday, that right?"

"I believe so."

"Good luck," Rand said with a smile.

"Did they have these spy games when you were head of Double-C, sir?"

Rand shook his head. "We were too busy with the real thing."

That evening, he made his usual call to Leila back in his room and then decided to eat downstairs rather than order room service. It wasn't yet eight o'clock and the dining room was still open. He chose a table for two in a corner of the room and ordered the day's special, fresh sole, with a glass of white wine.

He was savoring the first sip of the wine when someone cleared his throat close by. "Pardon me, sir. May I join you for a moment?"

Rand glanced up and recognized the blue-eyed young Trotter, who'd been knocked down by Cranston at the foot of Haymarket during Wednesday's games. "Certainly. Trotter, isn't it?"

"Jeff Trotter, sir." They shook hands and he slipped into the chair opposite Rand. "I hate to interrupt your dinner, but I came here specifically to see you. When you didn't answer the phone, I glanced in here hoping to find you. Something important's come up and I don't know who else to turn to."

"If it's about the games, I really must remain neutral."

"It's not, sir, except that something in the games led me to this discovery. You know we were using one-time pads for encoding and decoding messages on Tuesday."

"I remember." Rand took another sip of wine.

"Well, that evening after it was over I was the last one to leave.

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I was using a gold pencil during the decoding and I couldn't find it. I was afraid it had gotten swept into the wastebasket with all the scrap paper. It had been collected for shredding, as it is every day, but the basket was by the shredder. I went through everything and didn't find the pencil, but I did find this."

He held out a crumpled square of paper. "A sheet from a one-time pad," Rand said. "We were using them all day. What's so unusual about it?"

"It's not one of ours, sir. It's the Cyrillic alphabet. See all these odd letters?"

Rand took a closer look and saw that he was right. "I'm sure we have Russian one-time pads in the office."

"But none of them were being used on Tuesday. The entire game was conducted in English. Besides, I've seen the Russian pads in the office. They're printed on pink paper. This paper is white."

Rand smiled benevolently. "Tell me your theory, Trotter."

"Well, sir, perhaps there's a traitor in the organization—a Russian mole. During the game he realizes he has a sheet of paper from a Cyrillic one-time pad in his pocket. What easier way to get rid of it than to toss it away to be shredded with everything else?"

At that moment the waiter arrived with Rand's fish. He unfolded his napkin and said, "I really think you should see Hastings about this."

Trotter blinked at him. "But don't you see, sir, all members of the department are under suspicion. Hastings himself could be the traitor."

Rand sighed and put down his knife. "I'm afraid this game-playing has gotten the better of you and let your imagination run wild. I appreciate your telling me this, but now you really must excuse me before my dinner grows cold."

Trotter looked crestfallen. "I'm sorry to have taken up your time, sir. I just felt that someone in authority should know. I've been carrying that thing around with me for two days and I had to tell somebody."

"I understand."

"Good night, sir."

"Good night, Trotter."

Rand marveled at the intricate plots these young people could sometimes build from the most innocent of events. He watched Jeff Trotter disappear into the hotel lobby and then turned his attention to his dinner. It was some time before he noticed that the slip of

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crumpled paper from the Cyrillic one-time pad was still on the table next to his plate. He started to crumple it further but then changed his mind and slipped it into his pocket.

On Friday morning, Rand started off with the Blue Squad. While he was interpreting a rule regarding the computer generation of a random-chance program, he happened to notice that Celia Faraday was working with a slim gold pencil. "Where did you get that?" he asked casually. "Is it yours?"

"I picked it up somewhere," she answered with a shrug. "I forget where."

"Jeff Trotter says he lost a gold pencil the other day."

"Maybe it's his." She held it out. "Here, give it to him. Tell him I'm sorry if I picked it up by mistake."

For the first time he realized that Trotter was not among the Blue Squad members assembled in the suite. "Isn't he here today?"

"He doesn't seem to be." She rummaged in her purse for a pen. "Hastings has been looking for him, too."

At the first opportunity, Rand made his way down the corridor to Hastings' office. The older man was bent over his computer terminal watching the progress of the spy game. "Damned fascinating, Rand. We have some real brains out there."

"Trotter's not among them today."

"I've sent someone round to his apartment. Perhaps he's ill."

"You mean he didn't phone in?"

"Not a word."

"I saw him last evening."

"Oh?"

"He stopped by my hotel while I was having dinner."

"Did he seem all right then?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"What does that mean?"

The phone at Hastings' elbow gave its low but distinctive chirp. "Hastings here," he answered. "I see." He listened. "We'll get right on it."

"Trotter?" Rand asked as he hung up.

"He seems to have disappeared. There are signs of a struggle in his apartment—furniture overturned, blood on the floor. It could be serious."

"Keep me advised, will you?" Rand said.

Rand went back to the small office they'd assigned him for his

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week as Control. He'd folded the slip of paper Trotter had left and placed it inside his wallet. Now he brought it out and studied it more closely. It was certainly the Russian alphabet, though Rand knew it was also used for the related Bulgarian, Serbian, and Mongolian languages. However, there were a dozen perfectly innocent explanations for its presence in the wastebasket. It could have been used to make a point during the spy game, though as Control he would have known if that happened. It could have been shown by one of them as a souvenir of some past assignment, but if it was being kept as a souvenir why throw it away?

Was it possible that Trotter was correct about its significance and that there was a spy or a traitor inside Double-C or M15? Certainly it wouldn't have been the first time, but would a spy really walk around with such incriminating evidence in his pocket? Or her purse? He began to wonder if Trotter had known more than he was telling.

Hastings came by during the lunch break. "Still no sign of Trotter. We're going to have to assume the worst, that he's been killed and his body spirited away."

Rand made a decision. He'd known Hastings a good deal longer than Jeff Trotter had. If there was a spy in the building, it certainly wasn't Hastings. There was a practical reason for this conclusion, too. Hastings was the only one with his own personal shredding machine. He'd have had no reason to toss the incriminating scrap in with the general collection to be shredded.

"Trotter spoke to me last night at dinner," he began. "He believes we have a security risk here."

"That business again!" Hastings seemed exasperated. "He came to me a month ago with a crazy story."

"What was it?"

"There'd been a glitch in the computer system and he claimed he was getting some sort of coded printout. He left his office to see what the trouble was and when he came back ten minutes later the printout was gone—someone had ripped it from his machine and taken it away."

"It could have been Internal Security," Rand suggested.

"He asked them and they swore they knew nothing about it."

"What did you do?"

"Nothing. There could have been any number of innocent explanations. No doubt someone was just fooling around, and when they

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found out their computer doodling had been printed out on Trotter's machine they went and removed it."

"Let me tell you about last evening," Rand said. He ran quickly through the story Trotter had told him and then produced the sheet from the Russian one-time pad. "It's another instance of something which may be perfectly innocent, but—"

"But these are two 'innocent' things within a month. I see what you mean. Trotter may have been right to be bothered by it."

He turned over the crumpled piece of paper in his hand. "What do *you* make of this, Rand?"

"We all know the function of one-time pads. The agent in the field and his controller each has an identical pad. On every sheet, the letters of the alphabet are arranged differently, to be read through some sort of grid or used in some other method of enciphering and deciphering. Either side can initiate use of a particular sheet of the pad, but it is used only once and then discarded. The great advantage is that the cipher changes each time. Even if a message is deciphered, it's no help to the enemy on future messages."

"Get to your point."

"Suppose we do have a spy or mole in the building. Suppose he or she has figured a way to send messages enciphered with the one-time pad out of the building to another computer terminal. It would be simple enough to do with an ordinary telephone. He's using the one-time pad inside this building, perhaps copying and enciphering key documents. After each message he must dispose of the incriminating sheet of paper. It's not easy to get away with burning a piece of paper now that the building has strict smoking regulations, so he crumples it and drops it in the wastebasket for shredding. Effective enough, so long as no one happens to go through the trash as Trotter did on Tuesday night."

"You're saying that's what happened?"

"No, I'm saying that if you accept the fact of the spy, the finding of this piece of paper makes a certain amount of sense. Given Trotter's previous experience with the computer printout, he'd already be suspicious and looking for something like this. Given your reaction to his last alarm, I can also understand why he came to me."

"He has a very youthful imagination."

"That blood on the floor of his apartment—is it his?"

"It could be," Hastings admitted. "It's the same blood type."

"What are you going to do about it?"

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"What can I do? What would you suggest?"

Rand knew how difficult it was for Hastings to speak those words. "We go on with the spy game as if nothing happened. Meanwhile, we hope that Trotter turns up. —Now what about tomorrow's exercise?"

"Both the Red and Blue Squads assemble for separate briefings at the end of the day today. We begin tomorrow in the field—literally. Eight A.M., Hampstead Heath. The Red Squad will be running a defector, who has to reach Heathrow Airport undetected. Since treason is not a gentleman's game, the would-be defector will be issued further instructions not given to the Blue Squad. If the routes to Heathrow seem blocked or dangerous, he may proceed by train to Dover and cross the Channel by ferry. If he reaches the other side, the Red Squad wins the day."

"Hardly fair, is it?"

"As I said, treason is not a gentleman's game. They must be prepared for a double-cross, even by those issuing instructions. That's a known component of spy games. Only Control must tell the truth at all times if asked to make a judgment."

Following the day's indoor exercises, Hastings assembled the Red Squad in the suite of offices. Rand stood on the sidelines listening to his instructions. "One of you should be chosen by lot to play the role of the defector. The others will lend any kind of support that is necessary. You should make the choice now, so we can outfit the proper person. Never fear, we have sizes to fit all."

Steven Cranston drew the short straw again and there was a murmur of dissent from the other seven players. "See here," Perkins objected, "it really should be my turn, or one of the others'. Why should he have all the fun?"

"I don't consider it fun," Cranston argued. "I shoulder all the bloody blame if I'm caught before I reach the airport."

A woman named Rosemary added her opinion. "Cranston failed on Wednesday. Give us someone else."

"I did *not* fail!" he corrected her. "It was a draw. Give me a chance to win it rightly this time."

Hastings scratched his head. "I suspect this is a decision for Control." He turned to Rand. "Can they choose someone else?"

Rand shook his head. "If Mr. Cranston wasn't to be eligible he should have been omitted before the drawing of lots. Now that he's

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been chosen, there can be no substitution unless Mr. Cranston himself requests it."

"Which I'm not going to do," Cranston told them. "Look, Perkins, you can be my outrider if you wish. How's that?" The way the spy games had evolved, the aggressor in outside activities was allowed an outrider or scout to precede him into dangerous areas. Cranston hadn't used one on Wednesday, but his decision now seemed to please Brian Perkins.

"Fair enough," Perkins agreed. "Let's get into our clothes."

The Red Squad aggressor and the outrider, when there was one, left their clothing and personal effects at the office the night before taking part in an outside activity. There were two reasons for this—the practical one of protecting their own clothing from the stains of paint bullets and the like, and the psychological one of giving the aggressor a whole new personality.

When Cranston and Perkins were dressed, Hastings gave them the secret instructions allowing them to divert to Dover if necessary. "There's an advantage in using an outrider in this sort of spy game," he pointed out. "The outrider can take one route while the aggressor takes the other. The other squad doesn't know which is the true defector. It adds a touch of realism to the game and causes them to split their forces."

They finished the briefing and Rand followed Hastings down the hall to the suite occupied by the Blue Squad. There was a somber atmosphere and it was obvious that news of Trotter's disappearance had spread among them, though it hadn't yet reached the Red Squad.

"You know your assignment," Hastings told them. "We'll assemble at Hampstead Heath at eight tomorrow morning. Any further plans will be up to you. Questions?"

"What about Trotter?" Celia asked. "He was one of my partners on the last go-round."

"Trotter has gone missing. Use someone else." His answer was short and crisp, making it clear he had no intention of pursuing the subject now.

She shrugged and turned to one of the men. "How about you, Reilly? Will you team up with me?"

"Glad to." Reilly was a slight, balding man with thick glasses who Rand had met once or twice. He was especially good with ciphers written in foreign languages, something Rand had always found difficult to master.

Hastings ran over the general rules one more time, then said,

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"We'll meet on the Heath at eight o'clock sharp. Good luck to you all."

Back in his office, there was a message waiting. "It's Scotland Yard," he told Rand. "They have something on young Trotter. Come on."

At the apartment building where Trotter lived, they found a number of detectives and technicians around back, where a pile of bricks for some future construction work had been covered with plastic sheeting to protect it against thieves. An inspector met them and led the way. "Over here," he said. He lifted a corner of the plastic and they peered at the dead face of Jeff Trotter. "It looks like his killer carried him down here to delay our finding the body."

"How was he killed?" Rand asked.

"Knife wounds—several of them."

As they walked back to the car, Rand said, "I suppose finding his body verifies one thing. He was right about a mole in the department."

"It might have been a robbery," Hastings said, sounding as if he was trying to convince himself. "A robbery and nothing more."

"That's what we're supposed to think. But would a robber risk carrying his body downstairs and hiding it beneath that plastic sheet?"

"Why would your mole risk it?"

"I don't know," Rand admitted. "Let me sleep on it."

Saturday was sunny and reasonably warm for the start of the weekend. Even at eight in the morning Hampstead Heath had more than the usual number of strollers, joggers, and dog-walkers. Located in North London, it is a place of ponds and open spaces, as well as walkways lined with beech trees that could seem sinister even by daylight.

Cranston had played on Hampstead Heath as a child, and as he made his way along the path he remembered those days so long ago. Now in a sense he was still playing, pretending to be alone as he kept Brian Perkins in sight out of the corner of his left eye. But this was a game for spies, and it was the day of his defection. As he walked, he was alert for members of the Blue Squad trying to stop him. So far he'd seen no one. The coast was clear, as smugglers used to say.

It wasn't until he was leaving the Heath that he spotted Reilly ahead of him, seated on a bench across the street. Reilly's eyes were

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on Perkins, as planned, and he didn't spot Cranston as a taxi pulled up in response to his raised hand.

"Where to, gov'nor?" the driver asked.

"Gatwick Airport, please."

Gatwick was London's second airport, located an hour or more south of the city on the route to Brighton. Though not as large as Heathrow, it had frequent international flights. Cranston figured the Blue Squad would have people at Heathrow, and if they followed Perkins to Dover they'd have that covered, too. The instructions hadn't mentioned Gatwick one way or the other, but he knew the spy-game rules allowed a great deal of spur-of-the-moment creativity on the part of the aggressor.

"That's an expensive drive from here," the cabbie told him. "We have to go all the way through the city."

"It's all right," Cranston assured him. "I'm on an expense account."

The city traffic wasn't too bad on a Saturday morning and they made better time than he'd hoped. Once they were on the M23 motorway, however, the driver seemed to hesitate. "Where are you going?" Cranston asked as they suddenly pulled off at an exit still some distance from Gatwick.

"A detour here, sir."

"Detour? I didn't see any sign."

The cabbie said nothing, but slowed to a stop a little way down the road. Cranston noticed a car parked just off the road ahead of them. The passenger door opened and he saw Rand emerge. He got out of the taxi immediately. "What the hell is this? Have I violated the rules?"

"I'm afraid you have," Control answered with a touch of regret.

"There was no Gatwick prohibition in the rules."

"I'm not talking about the spy-game rules. We believe you've been sending coded messages on the computer, compromising some of the work of Double-C."

"That's ridiculous!"

"We further believe you murdered Jeff Trotter on Thursday night when he came to suspect there was a spy in the organization."

"You're mad—I demand to be taken to Hastings at once."

"You'll see Hastings soon enough. I want to know if you're prepared to cooperate with us, to tell us exactly what information you've passed on to the other side."

Cranston glanced back at the taxi where the driver still sat behind the wheel. "I suppose he's one of your people."

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"It seemed wise to have a taxi stationed at the Heath. I'm surprised you took the first one. Spy games should teach you to be more careful."

Cranston wet his lips. "What did Trotter tell you?"

"Only that he'd found a crumpled sheet from a Russian one-time pad in the rubbish Tuesday night. He'd had earlier reason to suspect something was going on with the computers—his machine printed out some coded messages which were then removed while he was out of the office. But it was this piece of paper he gave me on Thursday that started me thinking. If there *was* a spy and he was enciphering messages in the office using a one-time pad, how would he dispose of the sheets from the pad? Burn them, shred them, eat them, flush them down the toilet? All possibilities, certainly, though burning has become difficult because of the smoking regulations and eating might be noticed. Even flushing requires a trip to the bathroom, which is not always possible on the spur of the moment. Shredding is fine except that Hastings has the only personal shredder—everything else is collected at the end of the day. So what could be done?"

"*You* seem to know it all. What *could* be done?"

"Nothing," Rand said. "I've postulated a problem where none really exists. The spy is not under suspicion. He is, in fact, a trusted member of the inner circle. No one will search him when he leaves the building. He simply crumples it into a ball and puts it in his pocket, to be disposed of when he reaches home. But on Tuesday evening he changed tactics. He did throw the paper away."

"Why?" Cranston asked. His throat had gone dry.

"Because on Tuesday evening he couldn't leave it in his pocket. His clothes and personal effects were taken away from him when he was outfitted for The Lightbulb Battle. There was no outrider on Wednesday. Only *you* had to change clothes, only *you* would be forced to dispose of the incriminating piece of paper. You couldn't risk leaving it in your pocket or wallet, or trying to transfer it to the new suit. It was your bad luck that Trotter lost his gold pencil and went searching through the trash for it.

"You tried to hide his body so the games would go on, so you could reach the airport today and really defect. That was your plan, wasn't it? Only Trotter's flat was dark and you overlooked some blood on the floor."

Cranston punched Rand hard on the tip of his jaw, knocking him

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backward, then he turned and ran for the taxi. The driver was just emerging when he hit him, too.

"Freeze, Cranston, or you're a dead man!" a familiar voice shouted. It was Celia Faraday in her jeans and a sweater. She'd come out of the driver's side of Rand's car and was holding the target pistol in both hands.

"More paint bullets?" he asked with a smile, reaching toward his own inside pocket.

"They're real this time."

But he didn't believe it until one thudded into his shoulder and he saw the blood.

It was nearly midnight when Rand returned home. Leila gasped when she saw his swollen and discolored jaw. "You look as if somebody punched you. I thought this was supposed to be a training exercise."

"I'm out of training," he said. "Pour us a drink and I'll tell you about it."

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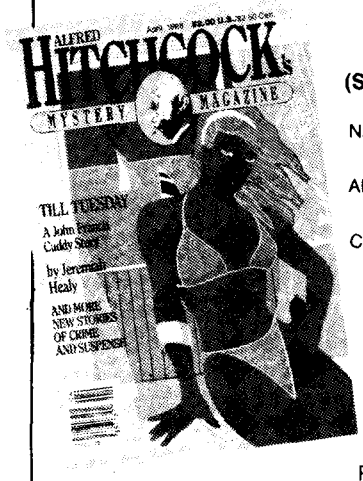

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He tugged at the bars as he looked out on the stars, every night imagining the countless hands that had worn the cold steel smooth, the other troubled faces buried in the same stained, striped pillow. He had no visitors, no mail, no calls. He spoke to no one but Dexter, the turnkey, and then only when he wanted to use the typewriter.

Although Stephen Gregory—"transplanted Chicagoan and scratch golfer"—is a published poet and a screenwriter and script analyst in Los Angeles, this is his first published fiction . . .

THE MOUSETRAP

by STEPHEN GREGORY

They found him in the desert near the Mexico-Arizona border, wandering around with a stolen .45 and a flimsy story about doing himself in. The gun turned out to be the same one used in a local homicide days earlier, and he was convicted of second-degree murder and sent to the state pen at Yuma. The new inmate was treated decently—his request for a private cell was granted, and after the standard prison scrub and examination they left him alone for his first night in the small 8x12 cubicle with a barred window overlooking the exercise yard.

The next morning after breakfast, Dexter, the block guard, came by with a standard release form for him to fill out. It spelled out Yuma's ground rules—all five of them, in brief detail—and asked him to choose the option of going to work in the prison laundry or staying in his cell. He chose the latter. They supplied him with some books and paper and those harmless, gory, fine-point markers to write with, and after a few months passed without incident he was granted daily access to an old manual typewriter, which he could sometimes keep overnight in his cell. Once a week the prison psy-

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chologist asked to review his work, and Dexter usually brought his papers back within hours, sometimes with the doctor's comments scrawled in the margin in blue ink.

The cell itself was utilitarian and the penitentiary modern—painted cinder blocks and steel, the outer wall a wide stack of glazed brick some forty feet high. Rumor had it there was broken glass embedded on the top ledge, but no one had climbed far enough to confirm it. The mortar grooves and the bricks themselves were hardcoated with polyurethane, eliminating the natural handholds and footholds blazing in the every-afternoon heat like the windshields of the occasional cars racing down the highway in the distance. From the high window of his second-story cell, he watched them pass at night, their headlights carving twin cones of asphalt from the surrounding darkness.

The prison rested on a bedrock mesa twelve miles from the Mexican border, the flat, two-story blockhouse encircled by rugged desert terrain, the guard towers and walls, the usual array of administration and service buildings, a garage for the motor pool, etc., all within the confines of that high surrounding wall. The exercise yard was composed of four baseball fields, one of which was set aside for Mexican offenders more adept at soccer. They used the backstop under his window as one of their goals, and three times a week he listened to them curse in Spanish and send booming kicks rattling into the chain-link backstop perhaps six feet below his window.

He often thought of that backstop. Climbing the thing would be child's play for any healthy seven-year-old, and at night he dreamed of ways he could cut the iron bars from his window, wriggle out, leap the distance from the sill to the backstop, then climb down and dash across the yard to the base of the wall unnoticed. Although common sense ruled out such a plan, he nevertheless devoted one of every dozen waking hours to pushups and situps, and every night after lights-out he spent ten or fifteen minutes pulling on the two-inch steel bars, hoping for the day he would feel them give.

All summer the other inmates slept through the hot desert mornings and burned candles in the cool midnight hours, and he was no exception. He tugged at the bars as he looked out on the stars, every night imagining the countless hands that had worn the cold steel smooth, the other troubled faces buried in the same stained, striped pillow. He had no visitors, no mail, no calls. He spoke to no one but Dexter, the turnkey, and then only when he wanted to use the typewriter.

For the first time in his young life, he felt calm and relaxed.

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Deadlines had all since vanished, the pressures of responsibility had lifted like dust from a sudden breeze. The paint on the cinder blocks felt cool at night, comfortably damp, as if after the long day the walls themselves perspired. Funny, the worst part wasn't the loneliness—there were plenty of guys down the hall in the same predicament—it was the way the cell seemed to shrink an inch or so every day. After a month, he felt there wasn't room enough to turn around. Only the window saved him, and in time he memorized every detail of the exercise yard where the other inmates spilled their sweat for forty-five minutes every day, and the glazed brick border, and the sky beyond.

The days didn't melt together as he expected, calendar pages didn't turn at high speed. Every Monday the inmates of his cellblock got a shave, and a haircut if they wanted one. Wednesday afternoons, visitors were permitted. The mail came on Thursday, the tension growing as the mail cart creaked slowly down the corridor. In the cell next door, a kindly old man read his letters out loud, boldly, like a ham actor, though for most only silence followed news of another failed appeal, or trouble at home. Occasionally good news came, accompanied by a rare cry that brought Dexter running, his baton held ready.

The hardest exercise was the meals. Three times a day, the cellblock lined up two abreast and shuffled to the spotless refectory, where they waited for the previous group to clear out before inching forward for a ladle of this, a ladle of that. They always sat in the same seats, prohibited from touching their trays until the Assistant Deputy Warden finished with the day's announcements. Talking was forbidden in the refectory, but experienced inmates managed to mutter a few sentences before one of the guards made his rounds.

He never regretted forgoing the daily forty-five minutes in the exercise yard, preferring the silence of the empty cellblock to the company of the rabble sweating under the Arizona sun. They worked up a sweat that stayed with them until the next morning, when at dawn the prisoners lined up for their mandatory showers. Sometimes he heard them talking about him as a "crispy," someone whose denims always seemed pressed—a term of contempt, really—but for some reason no one ever bothered him further than that. Maybe it was that way with all the new lifers—they were given time to adjust at their own pace. No one was in a hurry to make friends in

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prison—no one offered advice or asked questions, no one volunteered, and no one asked for help.

Every night, long after lights-out, the same souped-up Camaro ripped north along the highway beyond the outer wall. In the arid desert stillness, the grinding gears and straining engine made "The Jet" a temporary, inescapable inmate, even in his dreams a haunting reminder of the planet they once shared.

One night a loud rumble woke him. At first he thought it was The Jet, but then he felt a tremor shake the building and a loud blast as the thunderstorm hit without warning, causing the lightbulbs in the corridor to quiver and blink. He hoisted himself to the window and looked out over the yard. A steady rain battered the dirt. Already puddles were forming around the bases and the batter's boxes. The big wall looked more slippery than ever.

Another flash of lightning coursed through the black sky, the jagged bolts like bulging veins in a forearm. He hung limp for a moment, then lay back down on the bunk, twisting his body in order to keep watch over the skies. With each thunderclap he felt the blockhouse tremble and heard the cheering of the inmates echo through the corridors.

The next afternoon he traded his cigarettes for a broken ghetto blaster, telling the grateful prisoner he wanted to try to fix it. That night he went to work quickly, carefully dismantling the plastic shell to expose the guts of the device. The damaged transistor boards he removed, and within minutes the faint radio signal from Somerton crackled to life. He listened until the batteries gave out, and by a stroke of luck heard what he'd listened for before the static returned.

Later that night he tossed the dead batteries on the bed, then one by one broke each tiny transistor from its pegboard. He took a handful of the transistors and began chewing them thoughtfully, mashing them into small pellets of steel. Quietly, he removed the speakers and the wires leading from the battery pack. By the time he'd finished unraveling the cassette circuits, he had nearly eight feet of wire. The odd screws and such, as well as the steel rims of the speakers, he placed on a pile with the transistor pellets.

The bed was the tricky part. It had taken months of effort, but a week earlier he'd managed to free one of the anchor chains from the bunk. There was no way to free the thick chains from the wall, but

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as he removed the pencil stub now holding the bunk in place he realized that by throwing his weight on the bed he could knock it free from the wall. He tested it a few times, and when he felt it about to break loose he stopped. Dexter was sure to come running if he heard any sort of racket.

The bedsprings were the most difficult. They were crimped to each other tightly, but by wedging the flat metal edge of the speaker in between them and prying he managed to unlatch three rows by midnight. Eighteen feet. It took a long time—he had to work them loose gradually, making sure to flush the commode whenever he came across one too rusted for subtleties. By 3:00 A.M., he had thirty-six feet of springs reconnected and snaked across the floor—enough to reach the ground, and then some.

When the first flash of lightning came, he counted off the seconds between the flash and the loud peals of thunder. The storm approached steadily, as the radio weatherman had predicted, and when the intervals reached one second he leaped on the bed the instant the sky brightened and the bed crashed to the floor as the thunder roared. He sat there in a heap, adrenaline flowing, but he heard no footsteps, no Dexter—only the chorus of cheers from the inmates enjoying the storm.

The last step! He had known that when he tried to wedge the window bars open with the bed frame something would have to give, and he'd guessed right—the bed frame was no match for the steel bars. He bent the long ends of the bed frame into J's trying, but it was no use. Dismantling and reconnecting it was difficult—he couldn't tighten the screws as firmly as he'd like—but by suspending the bent sides from the ledge outside his cell, he managed to construct a sort of ladder without rungs that reached down to the backstop. The wire he'd fashioned from the bedsprings he attached from each bed frame to the anchor chains hanging from the wall.

Finally, with some moistened paper, he wrapped the pile of stray metal and mashed-up transistors into a tight bundle the size of a golfball and wrapped a foot of the speaker wire around it. Then, as the lightning began to flash again, he hoisted himself up to the window, careful to keep one arm tightly around the chain rope. As he lowered the ball out the window, he swung it experimentally back and forth—the inmates' cheers fading dimly in the next flash.

Dexter saw the workmen clearing the debris when he drove

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through the main gate that morning. From a distance, it seemed like a modern sculpture, metal twisted this way and that, but as he approached a chill settled into his stomach. It looked like a mousetrap the way the metal framed the charred rubble of the cell, and, he thought later, like a signature to a suicide note no one, especially the investigators, would ever read. They'd classify it as yet another failed escape, but for the rest of the week Dexter seemed less vigilant, moping as if he'd failed someone.

DETECTIVERSE

CULTURE SHOCK

by PHYLLIS WHITE

Wee Willie Winkie runs the whole town,
Upgrades and downgrades by his smile or frown,
Skimming at the window, smuggling at the dock—
Always keep the kitty fed or he'll blow the whole block.

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a distinguished reprint by

ELLERY QUEEN

Is it possible that anyone reading this magazine has never read a story by Ellery Queen, about Ellery Queen? Is it possible anyone reading this magazine is unaware of the history of Ellery Queen?

In her January 1959 column in Esquire, *"Dorothy Parker on Books," the terror of the Algonquin Roundtable wrote, in a paragraph with the lead,* Gentlemen, the Queens: *"Tallest among the very highest-ups [in detective fiction] are the stories of Ellery Queen, an author somewhat difficult to explain. Ellery Queen is two men. Or perhaps it is better to say that two men are Ellery Queen—no, that doesn't look right, either. Well, anyway, it seems there are two gentlemen named Frederic Dannay and Manfred Lee, who banded together to write as one, signing their products as Ellery Queen. Then, possibly to make shorter the way on which lies madness, they named their crack brainchild, the hero of their many tales, Ellery Queen, too. So there, if you can clear your head, you are."*

A few paragraphs later she added: "The joint authors also toss off prize contests, gather anthologies, and get out a monthly magazine containing their own stories and those of other writers. That it appears only monthly is too seldom for me."

We've gone to thirteen issues a year since then, but hope Miss Parker would still approve of the contents of EQMM. *We're certain, at any rate, that she would approve of our reprinting from time to time the stories of Ellery Queen, which she described as having speed, ingenuity, and really brilliant examples of detection . . .*

"Q"

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THE FALLEN ANGEL

by ELLERY QUEEN

That everlasting cicerone of the world forum, Marcus Tullius, somewhere tells us amicably that fire and water are "proverbial," which is to say these ancient elements of life are truly elementary. If it is further presumed that where life burns, death with his sprinkler cannot be far behind, the case of Miles Senter *et alii* may be considered classic.

In that case, there was fire to the point of pyrotechnics, for though the New York summer was officially a mere ten days old the sun was already baking the Senter garden to the charred crispness of an overcooked piecrust and barbecuing the stones of the garden walls in a temperature more commonly associated with the Underworld.

As for water, below the east wall flowed a whole stream of it, for the Senter house was one of those marginal Manhattan affairs clinging splendidly to the island's shore and staring with hauteur at the untidy commercial profile of the borough of Queens across the commonplace swells of the East River.

Nor was antique harmony restricted to geography and the season. Mythology shared in the Senter case, and art. The house had been designed in the highfalutin' era, when architecture was cathedral and structural decoration full of monsters. The Senter pharmaceutical fortune had been baptized in the font of a purgative whose pink-on-black prose still illuminated the barns and jakes of rural America, and in building his mansion the progenitor of the Senter wealth—possibly in extenuation of its ephemeral source—had turned his eyes heavenward and built for eternity. Or at least for greater permanence than was promised by cathartic pills.

He had had his architect go for inspiration to the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. Unfortunately, for all the laxative riches at his command, the architect had neither an Ile de la Cité on which to build nor the papal resources of the Twelfth Century. Consequently, the astonished neighbors found themselves rubbing walls with a sort of gigantic architectural dwarf, an ecclesiastical Qua-

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simodo of a building, vulgar, ugly, and unbelievably uncomfortable. Miles Senter, who had been born in it, once spent an uneasy six months on his analyst's couch recollecting the horrid Gothic dreams which had visited him in his childhood.

The most frightening of these concerned the grotesque stone carvings which stuck out from the tower roofs like abnormal growths. These were the Senter architect's versions of the *chimeres* of Notre Dame cathedral. And the Chimaera, if you remember your Bulfinch and Bellerophon, breathed a particularly effective kind of fire.

Thus fire again.

As for water, unhappily the architect had confused chimaeras with gargoyles, and the monsters he had had hewn and installed on the cornices of the Senter towers, while they had the lion's head, goat's body, and dragon's behind of the true Chimaera, served the traditional gargoyle purpose of providing outlets for the rain which collected on the roof. In a word, they were waterspouts.

To complete the chaos, the founding Senter to his dying day persisted in calling them "angels," and his grandson Miles, as he settled substantially into the founder's shoes, canonized the heresy. Not so Miles' younger brother, David, who broke images as easily as he made them. David was a painter, with a studio on the roof of what—to his brother's vague annoyance—he would call "the Cathedral." David unfailingly remarked before guests, when Miles referred to the waterspout monsters as angels, that it gave an educational insight into their grandfather's view of heaven—if not Miles'.

But these are trifling, if pleasant, divagations. We were at a more serious business in the Senter garden on a recent broiling summer evening, with the East River lapping thirstily at the wall.

Two young ladies were perspiring under the sunlamp moon. One was Miles' wife, the reigning Mrs. Senter, and the other was Nikki Porter, who had exercised the private-secretarial right of deserting her employer in his evening of direst need—it had something silly to do with a book publisher and a deadline. But Nikki had run into Dorothy the day before, after a separation of years, and could auld acquaintance be forgot? Thus desertion, and the garden by the river.

The reunion was scented for Nikki with the aromatic news that Dorothy was now Mrs. Miles Senter, which she had certainly not been when Nikki had known her last, and with a something else that defied analysis and so challenged it. There were moribund shadows under otherwise lively eyes and a kind of "To the barricades!"

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gaiety which had struck Nikki as out of tune with recent wedding harmonies. Indeed, dinner had had a faintly royal *emigre* flavor—a taste of *noblesse oblige* and tumbrels at the door.

Even Miles Senter's confidential secretary, a Mr. Hart, a Princeton-type man with a crewcut and the well greased manners of an advertising-agency junior executive, took the first opportunity to make a discreet—and relieved—retreat to his room. And thereafter the young matron, with a female smile, had sent her husband packing and steered Nikki into the dark garden and immediately burst into tears.

Nikki let Dorothy cry, wondering if it might not be the house. The house was frightful—musty and catlike, with great clanging rooms, bedrooms uniformly exposed to the noise and damp of the river, and a colossal dinginess; it had not seen decorators for a generation. It was evident that Miles Senter, though kindly and agreeable, was a man of uncompromising conservatism and no imagination. In fact, Nikki had been rather shocked by him. He claimed forty-five, looked sixty, and was probably in his mid-fifties. And Dorothy was twenty-six years old.

Of course it could be that, although Dorothy had always been a practical girl, with no nonsense about her and a wonderful respect for accomplishment. It was quite like her to fall in love with a rich man twice her age. Or was it David? Nikki had heard a great deal about David Senter at dinner, although the artist had not joined them. "Has a water color on his mind," Miles Senter had said. "David's always up to something in his studio."

Nikki had gathered that David was a lovable scamp, with all the absurd ideas of extreme youth—"the Greenwich Village type," his brother had said fondly. So she was surprised to learn—from Dorothy—that David was thirty-five years old. To Miles, he would evidently always be a teenager, to be indulged or spanked by the hand that held the purse strings.

There was a self-portrait of David in oils in the living room—"the Nave, David calls it," Dorothy had laughed as Miles frowned—and he certainly looked Byronic enough to explain Dorothy's tears in the garden. He was a dark, handsome fellow with the devil in his eyes, or at least he had painted the devil there. Yes, it might well be David.

And apparently it was. For when Dorothy began to explain her tears, the first thing she did was praise her husband. Miles was the finest, tenderest, most considerate, most generous husband in the

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world. And she, Dorothy, was the most ungrateful, confused, irresponsible bitch who had ever lured a good man into marriage. Oh, she'd thought she was in love with him, and Miles had been so *solid*. And persistent, of course. She really hadn't lured him, he'd sort of lured himself, but then it was equally true that she hadn't been true-blue honest with herself—she'd only thought she was being.

"Oh, Nikki, don't think horrible things of me. I've fallen in love with somebody else."

So there it was.

Nikki sipped her Bombay Cooler, which she had had the providence to take into the garden with her. "Well, suppose you have," she said, as brightly and illusively as the long reflections on the river. "Those things happen, Dorothy."

"But, Nikki, what shall I do? I don't want to hurt Miles. He's a little limited, of course, but salt of the earth, really a darling, and I'm afraid if I ran out on him now—so soon—I mean, I'm afraid—"

"You're afraid what?"

Dorothy began to cry again.

"See here, Dotty," said Nikki, "you've eaten your cake and now you want it back. That's bound to be messy."

"What a horrid way to put it," said Dorothy, wiping her eyes a little peevishly.

"It's the man I work for," said Nikki, taking another sip. "Spells out every spade, and it's catching. Dotty dear, we're a couple of the girls and no men around. How much do you want this character S.E.?"

"S.E.?"

"Somebody Else."

"Nikki, I love him! I do!"

"And what is Somebody Else's view of the situation?"

"He says—"

"Wait." Nikki put her hand on her friend's bare arm. She said suddenly, "Smile, Dotty. Someone's coming."

Miles Senter's broad figure appeared from around the northeast corner of the house. The lights from the front of the building silhouetted him as he paused in the path, dabbing his half bald head with a handkerchief, peering into the gloom of the garden.

"Dorothy?" he called uncertainly. "You out there with Miss Porter?"

"Yes, Miles!" said Dorothy.

"Oh," said her husband, and he was silent. Then he cleared his

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throat. "So stifling indoors—radio says there's no relief in sight. I thought maybe you and Miss Porter might like to play some canasta." Senter took a slight step toward them, handkerchief in hand.

Nikki found herself thinking aqueously that the poor fish was out of his natural element, and it occurred to her that Miles Senter might be not entirely insensitive, after all. And because she felt sorry for him, Nikki looked away as he stepped forward. And that was how she happened to glimpse the descent of the angel—one of the gargoyle-throated chimaeras which had thrust its unlovely form from the tower roof over the garden for three-quarters of a century. The glimmering mass was falling straight for where Miles Senter's head would be in another step.

Nikki cried out, and the mass fell, and Senter fell—and Dorothy began to shriek with an automatic vitality, as if she were possessed. The burden of her dark litany was death and disenchantment, and the response from the Senter physician, old Dr. Grand who lived next door and had been dozing in his garden, was more in the nature of a retort.

Devil or angel, Dr. Grand remarked as he stooped over the fallen man, it had missed its mark, and he instructed Miles Senter to get off his backside and onto his knees, in a more fitting attitude to thank his Maker.

At this, Dorothy's husband scrambled to his feet, paler than the stone monster in the path, and turned his eyes to the heavens. But it was not out of gratitude for his deliverance. A black head projected from the roof—another gargoyle against the moon—and its owner was demanding in a curious voice what the devil all the noise was about. When neither Miles nor his wife replied, Dr. Grand explained in his crickety way, and there was a silence from the roof, and then David Senter's dark head vanished.

To Nikki, the air seemed suddenly chill, and she took no pleasure in it. And when David bounded around the corner to help his brother into the house, Nikki found him even more Byronic-looking than his portrait. And this gave her no pleasure, either.

The next day Ellery patiently pointed out that he made his livelihood inventing far cleverer crimes than Nikki was ever likely to encounter among her acquaintances, and would she please stick to his typing, for her social life was interfering with his contractual

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obligations—not to mention his publisher's advance, which was not payable until delivery of the finished manuscript.

"But, Ellery, it wasn't an accident," said Nikki, using the typewriter as an elbow-rest.

"It wasn't. I suppose," said Ellery, falling back helplessly on irony, "that's a demonstrable conclusion, like most of your conclusions?"

"I've been trying to tell you. I examined that tower roof last night, where the thing fell from—"

"With Lens and Calipers Among the Lotus-Eaters. And you found?"

"I told you. Weren't you listening?"

"You found that the cement holding the doodad to the whatsis was worn as friable as Roquefort. Astounding! And the waterspout weighed—how much did you say?"

"About a hundred pounds, Mr. Senter said."

"I refer you to Sir Isaac and the law of gravity. Shall we get back to mere fiction?"

"*Be* logical, but I still say it was no accident," declared Miss Porter, unmoved. "And that's why I suggested to Miles Senter last night—"

The doorbell trilled and Nikki stopped.

A terrible suspicion darkened her employer's countenance. "Nikki," he said in a Basil Rathbone voice, "you suggested *what* to Miles Senter last night?"

Nikki glanced mutely toward the foyer, which was in full cry.

Ellery groaned.

"You angel, I knew you wouldn't mind!" and Nikki flew. A moment later, Ellery heard her assuring someone that Mr. Queen could hardly wait.

To his astonishment, Ellery found himself immediately feeling sorry for the fellow. The president of Senter Pharmaceuticals all but crawled into view. It was a sort of nervous slither, and it went perfectly with his windy eyes and greying stubble. In fact, Miles Senter gave a creditable impersonation of a dope peddler about to consummate a sale.

He offered a trembling hand, refused a drink—"On principle, Mr. Queen"—accepted a cigarette, failed to puff on it, and through it all he was grateful, abjectly grateful, that Mr. Queen was bothering to see him at all. The fact was—well, it was damned awkward—Miss Porter being Dorothy's friend and so on—if Nikki hadn't saved his life the night before—

"Mr. Senter," said Ellery, "what are you trying to say?"

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Senter studied the dead cigarette in his hand, then he crumpled and crushed it between his fingers. "Queen, I think my wife and my brother are in love with each other." There was an ashtray at his elbow, but rather remarkably he placed the remains in his pocket. "In love with each other," he repeated, and stopped as if he expected Ellery to say something devastating.

But Ellery said nothing at all. And Nikki was finding one of her fingernails interesting.

"Nothing I've been able really to get hold of," Senter mumbled on. "It's just that Dorothy's been acting—well, I can't quite name it, but something's come between us lately. She's too darned polite to me!" he blurted. "And David's a handsome young artist and a devil with the women. Suppose I oughtn't to have expected much else—what do they say about old fools? But why didn't they come to me, instead of— Well, Mr. Queen, what would *you* think?"

"Using your major premise? Let's see. Your brother and your wife are in love, and last night a heavy waterspout parted from the roof where your brother has his studio and missed braining you by a hair. It would seem, Mr. Senter, that your brother tried to murder you."

"Then you agree with me." He sagged against the chair.

"Oh, no," said Ellery, smiling. "I've drawn a possible conclusion from a pair of facts, one of which is not a fact but an opinion."

"Well, there's a third fact I failed to mention," said Senter, and now his voice was hard, "and this one would satisfy a bank examiner. My father left the Senter enterprises to me during my lifetime. But when I die, David gets them."

Ellery sighed. "People will do odd things, won't they?" He rose. "While I can't share your certainty, Mr. Senter, I certainly appreciate your fears. How and when can I examine the roof without your brother David's knowledge? The sooner, I should say, the better."

Miles Senter promised to notify Ellery when the condition could be met, and later that day he telephoned, naming that very night for the investigation. "I'll have my secretary meet you at the side gate at midnight," he said, and he hung up before Ellery could raise his brows.

Ellery left his car on First Avenue and he and Nikki walked toward the river—slowly, for they were a few minutes early and the night steamed. There was a simmering lambency over the world that made straight lines fluid, so that when they came to the Senter

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house the whole incredible mass seemed in motion, as if it were about to change into something else.

Ellery felt his arm clutched and he murmured something soothing about heat waves and optical illusions, but Nikki's hold did not relax until a man stepped from the wrought-iron gateway and she recognized Miles Senter's secretary.

"I'm certainly glad it's you, Mr. Hart, and not some priest of the Black Mass!"

Mr. Hart looked baffled. But then he shook hands footballishly with Ellery, made a hearty remark about the heat, and ushered them across the front lawn. Ellery walked, rubbernecking. But at the skyline the mansion was still doing tricks.

Nikki clung.

"I take it you know why I'm here tonight, Mr. Hart?"

"Mr. Senter's just told me." The secretary sounded secretarial.

"What's your opinion?"

"Fellow in my spot has no opinions. Right, Miss Porter? —David? Oh, David has a shack in Westport where he gets away from it all when we poor goofs bore him or he wants to paint Connecticut barns. He was to leave tonight for over the holiday, but Mr. Senter didn't know what train he was making, so he set midnight as— I'm sure he must have. I haven't seen him—just got in from a party—but it's so late.

"This way, please. Mr. Senter's waiting upstairs for you in his own rooms. He's given the servants the night off, so you'll have a clear field. Mrs. Senter? I really couldn't say. I'd assume Mr. Senter's seen to that arrangement personally."

Mr. Hart, it appeared, was urbanely determined to be the most confidential—and uninvolved—of secretaries.

There were three doors, as in Paris, little early Gothic imitations surmounted by twenty-eight reduced kings of Israel and Judah, a skimpy rose window, and other shrunken wonders. Having passed through the central door, they entered a sort of medieval Never-Never Land which was mercifully in darkness, or at least in that curious negation of light passing for illumination by which material objects are guessed at rather than seen.

No one was about, and the great hall was as deeply hushed as a Hollywood sound stage—in fact, Ellery would not have been surprised had someone suddenly appeared in puttees and in a loud voice ordered the set to be struck. For all its age, blackened oak, and inky iron, it looked as insubstantial as a backdrop.

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They were halfway up the grand staircase and Ellery was just remarking respectfully, "Is that a bona-fide suit of Norman armor, Mr. Hart, or are we in the Metropolitan Museum?" when from somewhere above, slightly damped, came a short explosive *kwap!* like a little clap of thunder.

It brought them to a military halt, and for a moment they listened. But the angry sound was not repeated and they looked at one another. "What," asked Nikki in the strangest voice, "was *that?*"

"It couldn't be," said Miles Senter's secretary with an uneasy laugh, "what it sounded like."

"Why not?" snapped Ellery and he was away.

They found him a moment later in a sitting room upstairs, kneeling beside an outstretched man who seemed to have run head on into a copious quantity of tomato puree.

"Oh, no," said Hart idiotically.

"Oh, yes," said Nikki. "I was right. He was right. Murdered."

"Not quite." Ellery glanced quickly about. "Head wounds are often a bloody mess. No sign of the gun. I don't think it's fatal. Nikki, poke your head out the window and yell."

"Yell?"

"For that doctor! Next door, didn't you say? Hart, you come with me." Ellery was already in the hall.

"But Mr. Senter," began the secretary.

"Don't touch him! Whoever shot Senter can't have got far. Hart, where's the other way down?"

"Other way down?"

"Damn it, Hart! We came up the front stairs and didn't see anyone, so Senter's assailant must have escaped another way! Isn't there a second stairway?"

"Oh! Yes, Mr. Queen. Backstairs. Up the hall there—"

Ellery ran, and Hart trotted dismally after. Behind them, Nikki's demoniac voice shrieked for Dr. Grand.

The backstairs went gloomily down to an iron-clasped oak door which opened on the rear of the great hall. "Hart, you search the front—lawn, shrubbery, street. I'll take the rear." Ellery gave the man a shove.

The kitchens were dark. Ellery blundered through several coppery caverns, bumping into things and cursing. Finally he sighted a star, set a straight course, and in a moment was plunging through a doorway.

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He found himself in a stingy strip of back garden, and the first thing he spied was a spidery figure not ten feet away, clinging to the top of the wall separating the Senter property from its neighbor. Ellery jumped, clutching. His hands closed triumphantly about a bony ankle.

"Oh, thank you," said a testy voice. "I'm not as spry getting over this wall as I used to be when Elmo Senter imagined himself dying, which was regularly once a week. Catch me, please." And Ellery received in his arms first a medical bag and then a panting old gentleman who was chiefly bones.

"Well, well—what's happened now? Speak up, man! That woman yelled bloody murder. And who, by the way, are you?"

"Miles Senter first, Doctor—his upstairs sitting room. Gunshot scalp wound. You'd better hurry."

Dr. Grand looked incredulous. Snatching his bag, he scurried into the house.

Ellery followed the Senter-Grand wall toward the river. When he met the river wall, he turned north and toed his way among the Senter flowerbeds. Two upper windows glared out of the dark mass on the other side of the garden and Ellery saw Nikki swoop across one of them like an agitated fly. Then his hand encountered the splintery side of a wooden structure, which interrupted the river wall apparently for some distance.

Exploring it cautiously, he discovered it was a long, low shed, with its back to the garden and a flight of wooden steps along its north side that went down to the river. A boathouse. It struck him that a guilty man might find it irresistible.

Taking a grip on his slippery flashlight and wishing wistfully that he were Dan'l Boone, Ellery began to edge down the steps. But the steps squeaked and groaned abominably, as he had known they would, so he jumped the rest of the way, scrambled around the corner of the boathouse, found a doorway, and went in sidewise to sweep the interior with his light and catch in its beam the frightened face of a young woman.

There was no one else in the building and it was stifling, so Ellery sat down on a coil of nylon rope and asked, "Has anyone come this way in the last few minutes? Besides yourself, I mean?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because I take it you're Mrs. Miles Senter, and if you are," said Ellery regretfully, "it's my melancholy job to inform you that your

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husband has just stopped a bullet upstairs. And now would you mind answering my question, Mrs. Senter?"

"No one."

"You don't seem surprised."

"Is Miles dead?"

"I couldn't wait for the returns. So you've seen no one, Mrs. Senter. In that case, may I ask—?"

"You needn't," said Dorothy Senter. "I shot him."

When Inspector Queen arrived, there was blood in his sleepy eyes. "You can take this homicidal high life," he snorted to his son, "but I'm old enough to be your father. Couldn't you have let the local men handle this?"

In proper course, Dorothy Senter and Nikki Porter had hysterics and got over them, Inspector Queen had settled what facts there were to his peculiar satisfaction, men came and went, telephones rang and were silent, and at last they waited on the pleasure of old Dr. Grand.

At a few minutes before 2:00 A.M., Dr. Grand opened the door of Miles Senter's bedroom, drying his hands on a monogrammed towel. "Nothing to it," he chirruped. "It's going to give him an interesting part in what hair he's got left and that's about all, gentlemen. Wonderful constitutions, these Senters. Takes a lot to kill 'em."

Then he saw Dorothy Senter's face and his own changed. "Short as you can make it, Inspector Queen." He stepped aside.

There was an odd illusion of headlessness in the man who lay on the great testered bed, but when they came near they saw that it was only the effect of bandages against the pillows and a face from which all color had been washed.

Miles Senter looked at his wife with a sort of feeble eagerness, but after a moment the eagerness died and he shut his eyes.

"Mr. Senter," said Inspector Queen, "can you tell us what happened?"

"I don't know. I had been talking to my secretary, Mr. Hart, and I sent him downstairs to wait for Mr. Queen. I was alone. The door opened. I was about to turn around when something exploded and everything went black."

"Then you didn't see who fired at you?"

"No." The man on the bed sounded remote.

"Well, then, Mrs. Senter," said the Inspector, "suppose you tell your husband what you told me."

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Miles Senter opened his eyes quickly.

Dorothy Senter said in a high singsong, "I left the house after dinner saying I was going to visit some friends. I walked over to Central Park and sat down on a bench. After a while I got up and walked some more. Then I walked back to the house. It was almost midnight. I went up to my room, passing Miles' sitting room. He was in there talking to Harry Hart. They didn't hear me. I waited till Harry went downstairs, then I got a gun from my room that I've had for a long time and I went to Miles' room and I shot him." The man on the bed made a slight movement, then he was still again. "I ran down the backstairs to the garden. I saw the boathouse. I threw the gun as far as I could out into the water and ran to the boathouse and stayed in there, I don't know why."

Miles Senter was squinting, as if the light hurt him.

"And now about the gun, Mrs. Senter," said the Inspector, swabbing his face. "A twenty-two revolver, didn't you tell me?"

"Yes."

"The kind that has a cylinder that turns—that holds the bullets? That's the kind it was, Mrs. Senter?"

"Yes. But I threw it into the river."

"And a twenty-two, you said," said the Inspector, reaming his collar. "That's really interesting, Mrs. Senter. Because when my son found your husband on the floor, he also found the shell of the cartridge. Mrs. Senter, revolvers don't eject shells on being fired—the shell stays in the chamber. It's automatics that eject shells. And another interesting thing, this shell didn't come from a twenty-two, it came from a thirty-eight. So I regret to say you've been lying your head off, Mrs. Senter—and now what I would like to know is who you are covering up."

Dorothy gripped the footrail of her husband's bed.

"I'll tell you who she's covering up," said her husband, staring at the canopy of his tester. "She's covering up my brother David. Instead of going to Westport, David hid somewhere and then shot me. And Dorothy saw him do it. And because she's crazy in love with him—"

"Harry, no!" screamed Dorothy.

But Miles Senter's secretary was shaking his head. "It's no use, Dotty. I can't let this go on. Senter, David isn't the man. I am."

Miles Senter involuntarily raised himself. He stared at Harry Hart as if for the first time he was aware of more than a suit of clothes. In that stare he seemed to see everything at once, like a

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camera. And when the wounded man sank back, he turned his face away.

Hart was pale to the roots of his crewcut. "We tried our best to avoid it. But how can you stop a thing like that? It happened, and there it was. I wanted to tell you—"

"But there was always the salary," said the man on the bed, "eh, Harry?"

Hart went on with an effort. "Dorothy thinks I tried to kill you tonight. That's why she said she did it herself."

"Noble."

The other man was silent.

"So this has all been for love, Harry?"

"All for love," said Hart steadily.

"Touching. But I'm a businessman, Harry. I have the commercial mind. The way I see it, you knew I'd willed my estate to Dorothy. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of idle luxury—that's what I think you were after, Harry, and all that stood in the way was a simple-minded husband who's losing his hair. One shot and the problem was solved—"

"If it only were," said a voice, and, startled, they looked around—even Senter. But it was Ellery, looking thoughtful still.

"Harry Hart is unquestionably a talented fellow, Mr. Senter, but to have shot you tonight he'd have to have been a wizard. Hart was coming up the stairs down there between Nikki Porter and me when we heard the report of the gun over our heads. So maybe it's true love, after all. Human interest in quantity, Dad, but homicidally a famine. Could we have been right in the first place?"

"Looks like it," said Inspector Queen grouchily. "Well, Mr. Senter, I think you've had enough of us for one night, and Dr. Grand's looking fidgety. We won't disturb you again unless we get a line on your brother."

"My brother?" repeated Miles Senter painfully.

"On your death, I understand, Senter Pharmaceuticals goes to David Senter by the will of your father. And from what I've heard of Senter Pharmaceuticals, that's a goal worth shooting for—so to speak. I'm afraid, Mr. Senter, we're going to have to start looking for your brother."

That was an unmarked night, and when Nikki drifted into the garden she had no idea how much time had passed, if time had passed at all, except that the darkness was greyer, a boiling greyness

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that reduced everything to a glutenous mass, tasteless and unrecognizable. She groped for one of the bamboo chairs and a human hand clamped on her wrist. She squealed.

"It's only me," said a voice, and Nikki made out the long lines of Ellery, lying on the bamboo chaise on one elbow.

She dropped into the bamboo chair. "Well, I finally got Dorothy to sleep with a pill Dr. Grand gave me, and I didn't neglect to tell Mr. Hart a thing or two, either. I know *his* type. Plays golf like a professional—and women and the stock market like a yokel. Do you suppose New York will ever stop cooking?"

"It looks," said Ellery intently, "as if it's only just begun." He pointed. "The stars, Nikki, the stars."

"*What* stars?" Nikki sighted along his ghostly arm. "Oh, I'm in no condition for games!"

"Nor I." Ellery was still squinting obliquely skyward. "But this game has its points. I was lying here simmering away, waiting for you and wondering how a man who was merely going to Westport could disappear as thoroughly as David Senter seems to have done, when I began to realize there was something new under the moon. Nikki, look at the roof—over there, above the—the apse, I suppose you'd call it. That penthouse thing."

"That's David Senter's studio," said Nikki. "What's come over you?"

"See his chimney?"

"Of course I see his chimney."

"What's hovering over it?"

"A sort of haze, it looks like."

"It's smoke."

"Well, of all things," sniffed Nikki. "What *should* come out of a chimney?"

"Not smoke, Nikki—definitely not smoke, when we're a week and a half into what can be described with perfect decorum as a hell of a summer, the hour is almost three A.M., and the thermometer sticks at ninety-one."

Ellery rose from the bamboo chaise, still craning. "Nikki, someone's been playing with fire up there and I'm feeling just deep-fried enough to want to know why. Coming along?"

"Yes," said Nikki.

A few minutes later, Ellery was on his hands and knees on David Senter's hearth, inspecting the smoldering remains of a fireplace

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fire with the jerky fixity of an aroused hound. The studio, which was in Byronic disorder, was otherwise dedicated to thermal science and Gabriel Fahrenheit, but Ellery's perspiration hissed onto the grate unnoticed in the profounder concerns absorbing him.

Nikki, hung up in the doorway, thought she could see him dwindling by the inch. The roof was not cooler, Nikki had learned—it was merely less infernal than the studio, whose door and windows they had found shut. "Who the devil would start a fire in this heat?" she moaned. "Or, rather, who but the devil?"

"Exactly," said Ellery, turning his nose this way and that. "Therefore, heat wasn't the object. Leaving combustion. Leaving ashes. And the ashes tell me this curious conflagration was set in motion about three hours ago. It was green wood and slow-burning. Also, the damper is partially closed—"

"What," said Nikki wearily, "no Trichinopoly cigars?"

"No," said Ellery, his tone glinting like his skin, "but there's this." And he held up what Nikki thought for a horrified instant was a severed, charred human hand. But it was only a thick white-cotton glove, one of those sexless mitts which are purchasable at the gardening counter of any emporium. It was singed, soot-streaked, and spattered with mysterious-looking black specks, and it depressed her—for it sustained the crime story of the long night and made the unspeakable fire not merely devilish but, what was possibly worse, irrelevant. And when Ellery tasted several of the black specks, savored them like a gourmet, and pronounced them grains of gunpowder, Nikki nodded gloomily.

"Then that's the glove he wore when he shot his brother. Had a fire laid, ran up here, tossed the glove on it, and a match, and got away while we were finding Miles. Trust an artist to be inefficient. The least he could have done was make sure it burned up."

"He was in a hurry." Ellery replaced the burned glove meticulously. "He was also unlucky. Look there, Nikki."

Nikki looked. But all she could see were some tiny red scraps of paper or cardboard clinging like confetti to one of the side walls of the fireplace.

"What are they?"

"Unholy relics, Nikki. A rather perverted miracle. Stay here a minute, will you? I'll send Dad up. Some fur's going to fly around here. The roof's supposed to have been searched."

"Where are you going?"

"I'll be in the garden," said Ellery, and he went out so quickly

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Nikki had no time to assure him that she wasn't going to stay on the roof alone and he could put *that* in David Senter's fireplace and smoke it.

As it was, she had to stay until the Inspector appeared, roaring, and then she left quickly, too, with her hands over her ears.

She found Ellery at the northeast corner of the mansion, prodding the path and nearby shrubbery with the beam of his flashlight like a man who has lost something.

"Where is it, Nikki?" he demanded without looking around at her.

"Where is what?"

"The waterspout. That gargoyle that almost conked Miles Senter."

"Well, for heaven's sake," said Nikki crossly, "how should I know?"

"Wasn't it here that it fell?"

Nikki recognized a certain urgency in the Queen manner. "It was right here on the path last time I saw it," she said. "Night before last. —See? Where the flags are chipped?"

"I see where the flags are chipped," said Ellery, suddenly austere, and he went back into the house.

The next hour bubbled. Ellery went about demanding the waterspout, waking people up, whipping them to feats of memory and muscle, and generally making himself unpopular. Why he was so bent on locating an object which, after all, had failed to be lethal he chose not to explain, and the victims of his inquisition went about muttering while they searched. Harry Hart was roused, Dorothy Senter was slapped awake, Dr. Grand was routed from his aged bed next door. Not even Miles Senter was spared, although his questioning was executed with tactful dispatch.

In the end, the waterspout was not found, although the house was gone over from cellar to roof, and the grounds inch by inch. Nor could anyone remember having seen it since late afternoon of the day before, when the butler had stumbled over it on the spot in the path where it had crashed the night previous and, being the butler and not the gardener, had merely cursed and gone about his business. The gardener, a hickory-necked Irishman with the succinct philosophy of his profession, merely said, "Nobody told me to take the dom thing away," and went back to bed.

So there it was, or rather wasn't, as Inspector Queen said, and what difference its presence or absence made—

"Except that it's absent," said Ellery absently.

"All *right,* Ellery. So whoever tried to knock Senter's brains out

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took the dom, the damn thing away because somehow it left a clue to his identity."

"His fingerprints," said Nikki with a flicker of life.

"On rough stone, Nikki? And anyway, if he used a glove once he'd use it twice—and that reminds me of something a lot more important than missing angels, which is missing brothers who try to burn up evidence in fireplaces. Velie!" shouted the Inspector.

Sergeant Velie came wearily, drying his vast face with a crib-sized handkerchief.

"What did you find out?"

"From the Westport police, nothin' except a couple of new cuss words. They swear there's no evidence he's been to his shack in a month. Anyway, he ain't in Westport. The N.Y.N.H. and H. trains stopping at Wesport that left New York beginning last night can't remember anyone of his description. The New Haven ticket sellers at Grand Central can't remember ditto. Our taxi investigation—"

"You satisfied now?" demanded Inspector Queen, turning around. "Now where the devil did *Ellery* go?"

"Miles Senter's study," said Nikki.

At this moment the study door opened and Ellery appeared. "Senter's definitely missing. You satisfied now?"

"That he's definitely missing? Definitely."

"Velie, general alarm for David Senter. Put it through and then let's all go home and take a shower. I'm not coming back till he's found, and that's that."

"Make it—" Ellery glanced at his wristwatch. "Make it seven or eight hours, Dad. Take some time at this hour to get the equipment here that I phoned for in your name. Say, noon."

"Equipment?"

"You want David Senter, don't you?"

"Certainly I want David Senter!"

"Noon."

"Here?"

Ellery sat down on a settee, his knees apart and his palms supporting him, like an old lady who had been climbing stairs.

"It's the old arithmetic," he said. "Two and two, no trick to it. A solid stone object weighing one hundred pounds is missing. A man is missing. And beside the house runs a river. David Senter was murdered and his body sunk in the East River, and as soon as the

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harbor police can get their diver and dragging apparatus here—Does anyone mind if I catch my forty winks?"

They fished David Senter out with twenty-five minutes to spare, and Inspector Queen, who had not gone home after all, stamped in to announce with bleary wrath that Miles Senter's artist-brother had an artistic bullet-hole through his head and had had same, from all the superficial signs, for at least twelve hours.

"They're still looking for the gun," said the Inspector, glaring about Miles Senter's bedroom, where everyone was congregated. "But we'll get it, and when we do—"

"I don't think," said Ellery, "we'll have to wait that long. Mrs. Senter, wouldn't you prefer a chair? The evidence of who murdered David and almost murdered you, Mr. Senter—the logical evidence—is all in. We merely have to assemble it. And by the way, Mr. Senter, are you sure you're feeling well enough to go through this? It consists of four elements—the grains of gunpowder peppering the cotton glove which failed to be consumed in David's fireplace, the little scraps of red cardboard clinging to the fireplace wall, the shot that was fired in the upper part of the house while we were coming up the stairs, and—of course—the date."

"The date," said Inspector Queen.

"The date?" said Nikki.

"That's very nearly the best part of it," Ellery said enthusiastically. "Summer became official as usual on June twenty-first, a week and a half ago, so the holiday David Senter meant to spend reproducing a Westport barn was obviously the Fourth of July, as it's hardly necessary to point out. And putting an incipient Fourth of July holiday together with gunpowder grains, pieces of red cardboard, and a loud noise, you can scarcely avoid getting—a firecracker.

"Now it was midnight when we got here, Nikki," said Ellery, "and I told you at three A.M. that the fire in the roof studio was about three hours old. So that noise we heard coming up the stairs on our arrival, which we took to be a revolver shot, must have been a firecracker exploding in David Senter's studio fireplace. And since there was only one explosion that we heard, you couldn't have been shot at that time, Mr. Senter. You must have been shot a few minutes earlier."

"Then why didn't we hear the real shot?" Nikki demanded. She knew she looked like the wrath, her clothes felt leprous, and her

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friend Dorothy insisted on reminding her of something repulsive at Madame Tussaud's, so there was a snap in her voice. "Everything was so quiet we'd certainly have heard it, even from the street."

"The answer to that, I think," said Inspector Queen grimly, "is coming this way right now. The gun, Velie? Wrapped up in a pillow." And now he said, an amiable old gentleman: "*All* right, Sergeant. Wrap it up, and shut the door behind you."

And there was nothing to be heard in that room but Sergeant Velie's weighty tread and the life-cutting switch of the closing door. And the Inspector patted himself under the left arm, looking around.

"An explosion that was planned to be heard," said Ellery pleasantly, "and a prior explosion that was planned not to be heard. What was achieved? A small miracle. The firecracker going off was taken to be the revolver shot. A simple illusion designed to make us think you were being shot while we were coming up the stairs, Mr. Senter, when actually you'd been shot a few minutes before. A falsification of the time of the shooting which could have had only one purpose—to seem to give the shooter an alibi, an alibi for the false time, when the firecracker went off.

"And who had an alibi when the firecracker went off?" Ellery went on, smiling. "You, Dorothy Senter? No, you were alone in the boathouse. You, Mr. Senter—to be absurd? No, you were alone in your sitting room with a well creased scalp. You, Dr. Grand—to be fantastic? No, even you were alone, dozing in your garden. And David Senter was also alone—at the bottom of the East River.

"So I'm afraid," said Ellery, and now he was not smiling, "I'm afraid that leaves you, Hart, and by a curious coincidence you did have an alibi for the time when the firecracker went off, a very strong alibi. In fact, the strongest possible. You were walking up the stairs between Nikki Porter and me. An excellent bit of stagecraft.

"But as a technician I find you wanting. You had two tries at Miles Senter and you flubbed both. First you loosened the gargoyle waterspout and pushed it off the roof while Miles Senter was passing along the path below. You chose that method because his brother David, with the money motive, would be the natural suspect.

"When that didn't work, you rather extended yourself. Yesterday you hid the waterspout and last night you shot David to death, weighted his body with the waterspout, and sank it in the river, thinking he would make the perfect scapegoat since he would presumably never be found. Then you went to Miles Senter's sitting room, had your chat, walked out, and immediately walked back in

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and shot him in the head through a muffling pillow. And did you witness that, Mrs. Senter? I think you did—and that you left your heroine's husband for dead, Hart, which was criminally careless of you.

"The rest was timing. You hurled the gun into the river from one of the windows, dashed up to the studio where you had a firecracker ready on a fuse, dropped the glove with which you'd handled everything into the fireplace, tossed a match on the prearranged fire which was to destroy all the evidence—and didn't—and you hurried downstairs to meet me and Nikki at the gate and copper-rivet your alibi when the firecracker went off. Clever, Harry, clever—but a little on the intricate side, don't you agree? The hard ones are the simple ones."

Thus fire and water, in a case which aficionados say has become proverbial. Should time bear them out, Ellery will be pleased, for he has always considered Marcus Tullius Cicero one of the soundest old earbenders in the business.

"Q"

ON OUR COVER

Lady Antonia Fraser, oldest of eight children and mother of six, is one of a family popularly known in England as the "literary Longfords." She is the great-niece of the great Lord Dunsany ("Two Bottles of Relish").

A bestselling biographer *(Mary, Queen of Scots, Cromwell, Royal Charles)*, Antonia Fraser's novels and stories about investigator Jemima Shore began with the 1977 novel, *Quiet As a Nun,* televised here on PBS. Her *The Weaker Vessel,* a pioneering study of the suppression of women in Seventeenth Century England, was very well received in America.

Her latest Jemima Shore mystery, *Your Royal Hostage,* was published by Atheneum in February and she is presently working on a book about warrior queens.

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This night depository was a really neat gizmo. "Do all your banking any time you want, and more!" the ads had run when it opened . . .

BANK JOB

by JAMES G. HOLDING

I had my hands in the pockets of my overcoat trying to keep warm and passed the time checking my watch and reading the display on the screen of the automatic teller machine I was babysitting. The display didn't change. It read Temporarily Out of Service. If the guy from the Holiday Market didn't show up soon, I might be out of service as well.

I cursed the bank. At least they could have enclosed the machine and provided a bench. And some heat. On the other hand, heat and comfort would probably encourage loiterers and, with customers using the machine for late-night banking, loiterers can turn into robbers very quickly, especially in this part of town. Just sticking the machine in the wall and spotlighting it with floodlights was probably the best idea.

For the millionth time, I checked the automatic teller machine and my watch. I remembered the ads the bank had run when it opened: "Do all your banking any time you want, and more!"

Oh, sure, you could use your plastic I.D. card and your secret personal number to deposit to or withdraw from your account, and if you were a merchant and did business after the bank closed you could use the night depository to stash your receipts and earn interest over a night or a weekend. (This night depository is a really neat gizmo. The merchant's representative—for this machine, mainly big supermarkets like Holiday—would arrive with the deposit bag, insert his card, and push some buttons. The top of a steel cylinder pops open and his fat little bag full of money goes in, safe and sound.) The trouble is that, like any machine, these things can break. Easily. When they do, they automatically send out a message to a "response team," who come to fix it. Until they arrive, customers

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who want to use the machine can't, so they get angry and some schnook of a bank employee, generally from security, has to stand around and make excuses until the mechanics show up to set things right. Wherever it is these fixit men hide out, it takes an hour for them to respond, minimum. For my money, the old-fashioned steel safe in the wall that you use a key to get into is a better bet all around.

I heard footsteps. At last, the guy from Holiday Market. I pulled a crumpled piece of paper from my pocket and checked it. It told me that the regular depositor from Holiday was Tom McGuire, the owner. His was the fourth and final entry.

The footsteps got quicker and a paunchy, rodenty little guy came into the light. He was looking back over his shoulder.

I smiled and asked, "Mr. McGuire?"

He jerked like he'd been stung. "Who are you?" he squeaked. I mean it, he was badly scared of something. He kept looking back into the dark and clutching the deposit bag to his chest like it was his first born.

I gave him my most reassuring smile and fished out my I.D. "I'm Tierny, Mr. McGuire. Bank Security." I took a careful step toward him, offering the I.D. He took it and I touched my moustache self-consciously and mugged so he could compare my face with the bad picture. "Our teller machine and night depository are on the blink, and Mr. Cassidy, our president, asked me to wait here and help you and the other supermarket clients with your night deposits." I waved at the machine. "I've gotten the deposits from the other three markets—you're the last. When I have yours, I'll take them all into the vault at the main office. Mr. Cassidy told me to expect you all between eleven and eleven-thirty. It's almost quarter of twelve—I was beginning to worry about you."

The guy gasped with relief. "I'm so glad you're here," he said. "I think someone's following me. With Friday-night receipts, I always worry about being robbed. Are you armed?"

That caught me. Some things you really can't be ready for. I never carry a gun when I work. "Well, no," I answered truthfully.

"Best news I've heard all night." A slow, cocky drawl floated out of the night. Its owner followed.

He was big—almost as big as me, but young and more fat than muscle. I paid less attention to his looks, though, than to the pistol in his right hand. McGuire whimpered. I raised my hands and started to talk as soothingly as I could. "Now, just take it easy,

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friend. There's no reason for anybody to get hurt. You know you're making a big mistake." Stuff like that.

He let me roll for maybe half a minute, enjoying the feeling of having two older, respectable guys in neckties and overcoats crawling, then he cut me off with a wave of the gun. "Gimme the bag," he told McGuire. "Now."

McGuire was either totally petrified or real attached to his store's money. He didn't move.

"Mr. McGuire," I said calmly, "please give him the deposit bag." McGuire looked at me like I was crazy. I shot a glance at the kid to let him know I was trying. "We learn at the bank, and we teach our people, that money isn't worth anyone's life. Give him the money and he'll leave us safe." I turned my head. "Right?"

The kid nodded. Cocky.

McGuire continued to imitate a statue.

"If you don't want to give it to him, Mr. McGuire, let me help you. Please, I'm going to do it now." I was talking as much to the kid as to the store owner. I reached over and gently pried the bag out of his hands. When I had it, I carefully turned to the kid and tossed it. Up.

Nobody can watch two things at once. The kid's eyes followed the arch of the bag. I stepped into him fast, blocking the gun hand, pushing it to the left, and hitting him in the stomach as hard as I could. He whooshed and doubled over. I brought my knee up into his face and he partially straightened. I crossed with my left to his ear, but I think he was out before I connected.

Without knowing I'd done it, I had the money in one hand and the gun in the other.

There's nothing like training, I thought. And experience. I looked at McGuire. In the bright light of the teller-machine lights, he looked like a man who needed something to keep his mind busy.

"Mr. McGuire," I said, "I'm going to put your deposit bag in my car with the others." I moved to him and put the gun in his hand. I had to form his hand around it and point it so he covered the crumpled kid. "Then I'm going to a pay phone and call the police. They or the mechanics who are coming to fix the teller machine will be here within minutes. Do you understand all that, Mr. McGuire?"

Something clicked. He looked at me, then at the gun in his hand, then at the would-be robber. He took a marksman's stance, feet splayed, both hands on the piece aimed at the kid's head. He was

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grinning. "Right, Turner. I'll hold him here till you get back or the cops show up." Dirty Harry.

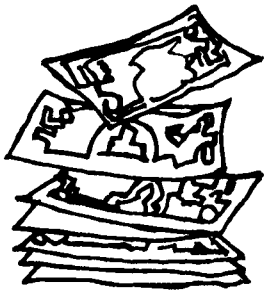
I didn't bother to correct him about the name. Instead, I turned and got into my car, started it, and drove off with the money on the seat beside me.

Five minutes later, I made the call to the cops from a phone in a parking lot. After I hung up, I transferred the four bulging deposit bags from the stolen car I'd been driving to my own. I also peeled off the fake moustache and wig, wrapped them in the overcoat, and chucked the bundle in a dumpster. Minutes later, I was on the Interstate, headed for home.

The drive would take all night and most of the next day, so I found a rock station on the radio and relaxed, reflecting on a job well done. The kid had almost wrecked the whole thing, but I'd handled the emergency well. After three weeks of planning, watching the teller machine to see who made big deposits when, tracking the depositors to their stores and learning their names, researching the bank and finding out the president's name, timing the response team, forging the security department I.D., and play-acting as a banker, I figured I deserved the money.

The knuckles on my left hand were throbbing, but I smiled when I thought of what was going on behind me.

They'd all be confused. The kid would be wondering how such an easy mark could have turned on him. McGuire and the other store managers would wonder where that man from security and their money had gone off to. The police would roar in out of the night to stop with probable amazement at the sight of McGuire holding the kid at gunpoint. Probably the most confused, though, would be the response team when they went to fix the teller machine and found that someone had smeared their plastic banking card with chewing gum before inserting it in the teller machine.



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"Welcome to Bow Island, Miss Shore," Coralie Harrison said. But her brother interrupted her. "I know why you're here and I don't like it," he told Jemima. "Stirring up forgotten things. Why don't you leave Miss Izzy to die in peace?"

Jemima smiled with sweetness. "Am I going to be allowed to inspect the Archer Tomb? Or is it to be across your dead body . . .?"

JEMIMA SHORE AT THE SUNNY GRAVE

by ANTONIA FRASER

"This is your graveyard in the sun—" The tall young man standing in her path was singing the words lightly but clearly. It took Jemima Shore a moment to realize exactly what message he was intoning to the tune of the famous calypso. Then she stepped back. It was a sinister and not particularly welcoming little parody.

"This is my island in the sun
Where my people have toiled since time begun—"

Ever since she had arrived in the Caribbean, she seemed to have had the tune echoing in her ears. How old was it? How many years was it since the inimitable Harry Belafonte had first implanted it in everybody's consciousness? No matter. Whatever its age, the calypso was still being sung today with charm, vigor, and a certain relentlessness on Bow Island, and on the other West Indian islands she had visited in the course of her journey.

It was not the only tune to be heard, of course. The loud noise of music, she had discovered, was an inseparable part of Caribbean life, starting with the airport. The heavy, irresistible beat of the steel band, the honeyed wail of the singers, all this was happening somewhere if not everywhere all over the islands late into the night:

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the joyous sound of freedom, of dancing, of drinking (rum punch), and, for the tourists at any rate, the sound of holiday.

It wasn't the sound of holiday for Jemima Shore, Investigator. Or not officially so. That was all to the good, Jemima being one of those people temperamentally whose best holidays combined some work with a good deal of pleasure. She could hardly believe it when Megalith Television, her employers, had agreed to a program which took her away from freezing Britain to the sunny Caribbean in late January. This was a reversal of normal practice, by which Cy Fredericks, Jemima's boss—and the effective boss of Megalith—was generally to be found relaxing in the Caribbean in February while Jemima herself, if she got there at all, was liable to be despatched there in the inconvenient humidity of August. And it was a fascinating project to boot. This was definitely her lucky year.

"This is my island in the sun—" But what the young man facing her had actually sung was "your *graveyard* in the sun." Hers? Or whose? Since the man was standing between Jemima and the historic grave she had come to visit, it was possible that he was being proprietorial as well as aggressive. On second thought, surely not. It was a joke, a cheerful joke on a cheerful, very sunny day. But the young man's expression was, it seemed to her, more threatening than that.

Jemima gazed back with that special sweet smile so familiar to viewers of British television. (These same viewers were also aware from past experience that Jemima, sweet as her smile might be, stood no nonsense from anyone, at least not on her program.) On closer inspection, the man was not really as young as all that. She saw someone of perhaps roughly her own age—early thirties. He was white, although so deeply tanned that she guessed he wasn't a tourist but one of the small loyal European population of Bow Island, a place fiercely proud of its recent independence from a much larger neighbor.

The stranger's height, unlike his youth, was not an illusion. He towered over Jemima and she herself was not short. He was also handsome, or would have been except for an oddly formed, rather large nose with a high bridge to it and a pronounced aquiline curve. But if the nose marred the regularity of his features, the impression left was not unattractive. He was wearing whitish cotton shorts, like more or less every male on Bow Island, black or white. His orange T-shirt bore the familiar island logo or crest: the outline of a bow in black and a black hand drawing it back. Beneath the logo

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was printed one of the enormous variety of local slogans—cheerful again—designed to make a play upon the island's name. This one read: THIS IS THE END OF THE SUN-BOW!

No, in that friendly T-shirt, he was surely not intending to be aggressive.

In that case, the odd thing about the whole encounter was that the stranger still stood absolutely still in Jemima's path. She could glimpse the large stone Archer Tomb just behind him, which she recognized from the postcards. For a smallish place, Bow Island was remarkably rich in historic relics. Nelson in his time had visited it with his fleet, for like its neighbors Bow Island had found itself engulfed in the Napoleonic Wars. Two hundred or so years before that, first British, then French, then British again had invaded and settled the island which had once belonged to Caribs, and before that Arawaks. Finally, into this melting pot, Africans had been brought forcibly to work the sugar plantations on which its wealth depended. All these elements in various degrees had gone to make up the people now known casually among themselves as the Bo'landers.

The Archer Tomb, the existence of which had in a sense brought Jemima across the Atlantic, belonged to the period of the second—and final—British settlement. Here was buried the most celebrated Governor in Bow Island's history, Sir Valentine Archer. Even its name commemorated his long reign. Bow Island had originally been called by the name of a saint, and while it was true the island was vaguely formed in the shape of a bow it was Governor Archer who had made the change: to signify ritually that this particular archer was in command of this particular bow.

Jemima knew that the monument, splendidly carved, would show Sir Valentine Archer with Isabella, his wife, beside him. This double stone bier was capped with a white wood structure reminiscent of a small church, done either to give the whole monument additional importance—although it must always have dominated the small churchyard by its sheer size—or to protect it from the weather. Jemima had read that there were no Archer children inscribed on the tomb, contrary to the usual Seventeenth Century practice. This was because, as a local historian delicately put it, Governor Archer had been as a parent to the entire island. Or in the words of another purely local calypso:

"Across the sea came old Sir Valentine—
He came to be your daddy, and he came to be mine."

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In short, no one monument could comprise the progeny of a man popularly supposed to have sired over a hundred children, legitimate and illegitimate. The legitimate line was, however, now on the point of dying out. It was to see Miss Isabella Archer, officially at least the last of her race, that Jemima had come to the Caribbean. She hoped to make a program about the old lady and her home, Archer Plantation House, alleged to be untouched in its decoration these fifty years. She wanted also to interview her generally about the changes Miss Archer had seen in her lifetime in this part of the world.

"Greg Harrison," said the man standing in Jemima's path suddenly. "And this is my sister, Coralie." A girl who had been standing unnoticed by Jemima in the shade of the arched church porch stepped rather shyly forward. She, too, was extremely brown and her blonde hair, whitened almost to flax by the sun, was pulled back into a ponytail. His sister. Was there a resemblance? Coralie Harrison was wearing a similar orange T-shirt, but otherwise she was not much like her brother. She was quite short, for one thing, and her features were appealing rather than beautiful—and, perhaps fortunately, she lacked her brother's commanding nose.

"Welcome to Bow Island, Miss Shore," she began. But her brother interrupted her. He put out a hand, large, muscular, and burnt to nut color by the sun.

"I know why you're here and I don't like it," said Greg Harrison. "Stirring up forgotten things. Why don't you leave Miss Izzy to die in peace?" The contrast between his apparently friendly handshake and the hostile, if calmly spoken words was disconcerting.

"I'm Jemima Shore," she said, though he obviously knew that. "Am I going to be allowed to inspect the Archer Tomb? Or is it to be across your dead body?" Jemima smiled again with sweetness.

"*My* dead body!" Greg Harrison smiled back in his turn. The effect, however, was not particularly warming. "Have you come armed to the teeth, then?" Before she could answer, he began to hum the famous calypso again. Jemima imagined the words: "This is your graveyard in the sun." Then he added: "Might not be such a bad idea, that, when you start to dig up things that should be buried."

Jemima decided it was time for action. Neatly sidestepping Greg Harrison, she marched firmly toward the Archer Tomb. There lay the carved couple. She read: "Sacred to the memory of Sir Valentine Archer, first Governor of this island, and his only wife, Isabella, daughter of Randal Oxford, gentleman." She was reminded briefly

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of her favorite Philip Larkin poem about the Arundel Monument, beginning, "The Earl and Countess lie in stone—" and ending, "All that remains of us is love."

But that couple lay a thousand miles away in the cloistered cool of Chichester Cathedral. Here the hot tropical sun burnt down on her naked head. She found she had taken off her large straw hat as a token of respect and quickly clapped it back on again. Here, too, in contrast to the very English-looking stone church with pointed Gothic windows beyond, there were palm trees among the graves instead of yews, their slender trunks bending like giraffes' necks in the breeze. She had once romantically laid white roses on the Arundel Monument. It was as the memory of the gesture returned to her that she spied the heap of bright pink and orange hibiscus blossoms lying on the stone before her. A shadow fell across it.

"Tina puts them there." Greg Harrison had followed her. "Every day she can manage it. Most days. Then she tells Miss Izzy what she's done. Touching, isn't it?" But he did not make it sound as if he found it especially touching. In fact, there was so much bitterness, even malevolence, in his voice that for a moment, standing as she was in the sunny graveyard, Jemima felt quite chilled. "Or is it revolting?" he added, the malevolence now quite naked.

"Greg," murmured Coralie Harrison faintly, as if in protest.

"Tina?" Jemima said. "That's Miss Archer's—Miss Izzy's—companion. We've corresponded. For the moment I can't remember her other name."

"She's known as Tina Archer these days, I think you'll find. When she wrote to you, she probably signed the letter Tina Harrison." Harrison looked at Jemima sardonically but she had genuinely forgotten the surname of the companion—it was, after all, not a particularly uncommon one.

They were interrupted by a loud hail from the road. Jemima saw a young black man at the wheel of one of the convenient roofless minis everyone seemed to drive around Bow Island. He stood up and started to shout something.

"Greg! Cora! You coming on to—" She missed the rest of it—something about a boat and a fish. Coralie Harrison looked suddenly radiant, and for a moment even Greg Harrison actually looked properly pleased.

He waved back. "Hey, Joseph. Come and say hello to Miss Jemima Shore of BBC Television!"

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"Megalith Television," Jemima interrupted, but in vain. Harrison continued:

"You heard, Joseph. She's making a program about Miss Izzy."

The man leapt gracefully out of the car and approached up the palm-lined path. Jemima saw that he, too, was extremely tall. And like the vast majority of the Bo'landers she had so far met, he had the air of being a natural athlete. Whatever the genetic mix in the past of Carib and African and other people that had produced them, the Bo'landers were certainly wonderful-looking. He kissed Coralie on both cheeks and patted her brother on the back.

"Miss Shore, meet Joseph—" but even before Greg Harrison had pronounced the surname, his mischievous expression had warned Jemima what it was likely to be "—Joseph Archer. Undoubtedly one of the ten thousand descendants of the philoprogenitive old gentleman at whose tomb you are so raptly gazing." All that remains of us is love indeed, thought Jemima irreverently as she shook Joseph Archer's hand—with all due respect to Philip Larkin, it seemed that a good deal more remained of Sir Valentine than that.

"Oh, you'll find we're all called Archer round here," murmured Joseph pleasantly. Unlike Greg Harrison, he appeared to be genuinely welcoming. "As for Sir Val-en-tine—" he pronounced it syllable by syllable like the calypso "—don't pay too much attention to the stories. Otherwise, how come we're not all living in that fine old Archer Plantation House?"

"Instead of merely my ex-wife. No, Coralie, don't protest. I could kill her for what she's doing." Again Jemima felt a chill at the extent of the violence in Greg Harrison's voice. "Come, Joseph, we'll see about that fish of yours. Come on, Coralie." He strode off, unsmiling, accompanied by Joseph, who did smile. Coralie, however, stopped to ask Jemima if there was anything she could do for her. Her manner was still shy but in her brother's absence a great deal more friendly. Jemima also had the strong impression that Coralie Harrison wanted to communicate something to her, something she did not necessarily want her brother to hear.

"I could perhaps interpret, explain—" Coralie stopped. Jemima said nothing. "Certain things," went on Coralie. "There are so many layers in a place like this. Just because it's small, an outsider doesn't always understand—"

"And I'm the outsider? Of course I am." Jemima had started to sketch the tomb for future reference, something for which she had a minor but useful talent. She forbore to observe truthfully, if pla-

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titudinously, that an outsider could also sometimes see local matters rather more clearly than those involved—she wanted to know what else Coralie had to say. Would she explain, for example, Greg's quite blatant dislike of his former wife?

But an impatient cry from her brother now in the car beside Joseph meant that Coralie for the time being had nothing more to add. She fled down the path and Jemima was left to ponder with renewed interest on her forthcoming visit to Isabella Archer of Archer Plantation House. It was a visit which would include, she took it, a meeting with Miss Archer's companion, who, like her employer, was currently dwelling in comfort there.

Comfort! Even from a distance, later that day, the square, low-built mansion had a comfortable air. More than that, it conveyed an impression of gracious and old-fashioned tranquility. As Jemima drove her own rented mini up the long avenue of palm trees—much taller than those in the churchyard—she could fancy she was driving back in time to the days of Governor Archer, his copious banquets, parties, and balls, all served by black slaves.

At that moment, a young woman with coffee-colored skin and short black curly hair appeared on the steps. Unlike the maids in Jemima's hotel who wore a pastiche of bygone servants' costume at dinner—brightly colored dresses to the ankle, white-muslin aprons, and turbans—this girl was wearing an up-to-the-minute scarlet halter-top and cutaway shorts revealing most of her smooth brown legs. Tina Archer: for so she introduced herself.

It did not surprise Jemima Shore one bit to discover that Tina Archer—formerly Harrison—was easy to get on with. Anyone who left the hostile and graceless Greg Harrison was already ahead in Jemima's book. But with Tina Archer chatting away at her side, so chic and even trendy in her appearance, the revelation of the interior of the house was far more of a shock to her than it would otherwise have been. There was nothing, nothing at all, of the slightest modernity about it. Dust and cobwebs were not literally there perhaps, but they were suggested in its gloom, its heavy wooden furniture—where were the light cane chairs so suitable to the climate?—and above all in its desolation. Archer Plantation House reminded her of poor Miss Havisham's time-warp home in *Great Expectations*. And still worse, there was an atmosphere of sadness hanging over the whole interior. Or perhaps it was mere loneliness,

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a kind of somber, sterile grandeur you felt must stretch back centuries.

All this was in violent contrast to the sunshine still brilliant in the late afternoon, the rioting bushes of brightly colored tropical flowers outside. None of it had Jemima expected. Information garnered in London had led her to form quite a different picture of Archer Plantation House, something far more like her original impression, as she drove down the avenue of palm trees, of antique mellow grace.

Just as Jemima was adapting to this surprise, she discovered the figure of Miss Archer herself to be equally astonishing. That is to say, having adjusted rapidly from free and easy Tina to the moldering, somber house, she now had to adjust with equal rapidity all over again. For the very first inspection of the old lady, known by Jemima to be at least eighty, quickly banished all thoughts of Miss Havisham. Here was no aged, abandoned bride, forlorn in the decaying wedding-dress of fifty years before. Miss Izzy Archer was wearing a coolie straw hat, apparently tied under her chin with a duster, a loose white man's shirt, and faded bluejeans cut off at the knee. On her feet were a pair of what looked like child's brown sandals. From the look of her, she had either just taken a shower wearing all this or been swimming. She was dripping wet, making large pools on the rich carpet and dark, polished boards of the formal drawing room, all dark-red brocade and swagged, fringed curtains, where she had received Jemima. It was possible to see this even in the filtered light seeping through the heavy brown shutters which shut out the view of the sea.

"Oh, don't fuss so, Tina dear," exclaimed Miss Izzy impatiently—although Tina had, in fact, said nothing. "What do a few drops of water matter? Stains? What stains?" (Tina still had not spoken.) "Let the government put it right when the time comes."

Although Tina Archer continued to be silent, gazing amiably, even cheerfully, at her employer, nevertheless in some way she stiffened, froze in her polite listening attitude. Instinctively Jemima knew that she was in some way upset.

"Now don't be silly, Tina, don't take on, dear." The old lady was now shaking herself free of water like a small but stout dog. "You know what I mean. If you don't, who does—since half the time I don't know what I mean, let alone what I say. You can put it all right one day, is that better? After all, you'll have plenty of money to do it. You can afford a few new covers and carpets." So saying,

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Miss Izzy, taking Jemima by the hand and attended by the still-silent Tina, led the way to the farthest dark-red sofa. Looking remarkably wet from top to toe, she sat down firmly in the middle of it.

It was in this way that Jemima first realized that Archer Plantation House would not necessarily pass to the newly independent government of Bow Island on its owner's death. Miss Izzy, if she had her way, was intending to leave it all, house and fortune, to Tina. Among other things, this meant that Jemima was no longer making a program about a house destined shortly to be a national museum—which was very much part of the arrangement that had brought her to the island and had, incidentally, secured the friendly cooperation of that same new government. Was all this new? How new? Did the new government know? If the will had been signed, they must know.

"I've signed the will this morning, dear," Miss Archer pronounced triumphantly, with an uncanny ability to answer unspoken questions. "I went swimming to celebrate. I always celebrate things with a good swim—so much more healthy than rum or champagne. Although there's still plenty of *that* in the cellar."

She paused. "So there you are, aren't you, dear? Or there you will be. Here you will be. Thompson says there'll be trouble, of course. What can you expect these days? Everything is trouble since independence. Not that I'm against independence, far from it. But everything new brings new trouble here in addition to all the old troubles, so that the troubles get more and more. On Bow Island, no troubles ever go away. Why is that?"

But Miss Izzy did not stop for an answer. "No, I'm all for independence and I shall tell you all about that, my dear"—she turned to Jemima and put one damp hand on her sleeve—"on your program. I'm being a Bo'lander born and bred, you know." It was true that Miss Izzy, unlike Tina for example, spoke with the peculiar, slightly sing-song intonation of the islanders—not unattractive to Jemima's ears.

"I was born in this very house eighty-two years ago in April," went on Miss Izzy. "You shall come to my birthday party. I was born during a hurricane. A good start! But my mother died in childbirth, they should never have got in that new-fangled doctor, just because he came from England. A total fool he was, I remember him well. They should have had a good Bo'lander midwife, then my mother wouldn't have died and my father would have had sons—"

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Miss Izzy was drifting away into a host of reminiscences—and while these were supposed to be what Jemima had come to hear, her thoughts were actually racing off in quite a different direction. Trouble? What trouble? Where did Greg Harrison, for example, stand in all this—Greg Harrison who wanted Miss Izzy to be left to "die in peace?" Greg Harrison who had been married to Tina and was no longer? Tina Archer, now heiress to a fortune.

Above all, why was this forthright old lady intending to leave everything to her companion? For one thing, Jemima did not know how seriously to treat the matter of Tina's surname. Joseph Archer had laughed off the whole subject of Sir Valentine's innumerable descendants. But perhaps the beautiful Tina was in some special way connected to Miss Izzy. She might be the product of some rather more recent union between a rakish Archer and a Bo'lander maiden. More recent than the Seventeenth Century, that is.

Her attention was wrenched back to Miss Izzy's reminiscing monologue by the mention of the Archer Tomb.

"You've seen the grave? Tina has discovered it's all a fraud. A great big lie, lying under the sun—yes, Tina dear, you once said that. Sir Valentine Archer, my great great great—" An infinite number of greats followed before Miss Izzy finally pronounced the word "grandfather," but Jemima had to admit that she did seem to be counting. "He had a great big lie perpetuated on his tombstone."

"What Miss Izzy means—" This was the first time Tina had spoken since they entered the darkened drawing room. She was still standing, while Jemima and Miss Izzy sat.

"Don't tell me what I mean, child," rapped out the old lady; her tone was imperious rather than indulgent. Tina might for a moment have been a plantation worker two hundred years earlier rather than an independent-minded girl in the late Twentieth Century. "It's the inscription which is a lie. She wasn't his only wife. The very inscription should have warned us. Tina wants to see justice done to poor little Lucie Anne and so do I. Independence indeed! I've been independent all my life and I'm certainly not stopping now. Tell me, Miss Shore, you're a clever young woman from television. Why do you bother to contradict something unless it's true all along? That's the way you work all the time in television, don't you?"

Jemima was wondering just how to answer this question diplomatically and without traducing her profession when Tina firmly, and this time successfully, took over from her employer.

"I read history at university in the U.K., Jemima. Genealogical

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research is my speciality. I was helping Miss Izzy put her papers in order for the museum—or what was to be the museum. Then the request came for your program and I began to dig a little deeper. That's how I found the marriage certificate. Old Sir Valentine *did* marry his young Carib mistress, known as Lucie Anne. Late in life—long after his first wife died. That's Lucie Anne who was the mother of his youngest two children. He was getting old, and for some reason he decided to marry her. The church, maybe. In its way, this has always been a God-fearing island. Perhaps Lucie Anne, who was very young and very beautiful, put pressure on the old man, using the church. At any rate, these last two children of all the hundreds he sired would have been legitimate!"

"And so?" questioned Jemima in her most encouraging manner.

"I'm descended from Lucie Anne—and Sir Valentine, of course." Tina returned sweet smile for sweet smile. "I've traced that, too, from the church records—not too difficult, given the strength of the church here. Not too difficult for an expert, at all events. Oh, I've got all sorts of blood, like most of us round here, including a Spanish grandmother and maybe some French blood, too. But the Archer descent is perfectly straightforward and clear."

Tina seemed aware that Jemima was gazing at her with respect. Did she, however, understand the actual tenor of Jemima's thoughts? This is a formidable person, Jemima was reflecting. Charming, yes, but formidable. And ruthless, maybe, on occasion. Jemima was also, to be frank, wondering just how she was going to present this sudden change of angle in her program on Megalith Television. On the one hand, it might now be seen as a romantic rags-to-riches story, the discovery of the lost heiress. On the other hand, just supposing Tina Archer was not so much an heiress as an adventuress? In that case, what would Megalith—what did Jemima Shore—make of a bright young woman putting across a load of false history on an innocent old lady? In those circumstances, Jemima could understand how the man by the sunny grave might display his contempt for Tina Archer.

"I met Greg Harrison by the Archer Tomb this morning," Jemima commented deliberately. "Your ex-husband, I take it."

"Of course he's her ex-husband." It was Miss Izzy who chose to answer. "That no-good. Gregory Harrison has been a no-good since the day he was born. And that sister of his. Drifters. Not a job between them. Sailing. Fishing. As if the world owes them a living."

"Half sister. Coralie is his half sister. And she works in a hotel boutique." Tina spoke perfectly equably, but once again Jemima

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guessed that she was in some way put out. "Greg is the no-good in that family." For all her calm, there was a hint of suppressed anger in her reference to her former husband. With what bitterness that marriage must have ended!

"No-good, the pair of them. You're well out of that marriage, Tina dear," exclaimed Miss Izzy. "And do sit down, child—you're standing there like some kind of housekeeper. And where is Hazel, anyway? It's nearly half past five. It'll begin to get dark soon. We might go down to the terrace to watch the sun sink. Where is Henry? He ought to be bringing us some punch. The Archer Plantation punch, Miss Shore—wait till you taste it. One secret ingredient, my father always said—"

Miss Izzy was happily returning to the past.

"I'll get the punch," said Tina, still on her feet. "Didn't you say Hazel could have the day off? Her sister is getting married over at Tamarind Creek. Henry has taken her."

"Then where's the boy? Where's what's-his-name? Little Joseph." The old lady was beginning to sound petulant.

"There isn't a boy any longer," explained Tina patiently. "Just Hazel and Henry. As for Joseph—well, little Joseph Archer is quite grown up now, isn't he?"

"Of course he is! I didn't mean that Joseph—he came to see me the other day. Wasn't there another boy called Joseph? Perhaps that was before the war. My father had a stable boy—"

"I'll get the rum punch." Tina vanished swiftly and gracefully.

"Pretty creature," murmured Miss Izzy after her. "Archer blood. It always shows. They do say the best-looking Bo'landers are still called Archer."

But when Tina returned, the old lady's mood had changed again.

"I'm cold and damp," she declared. "I might get a chill sitting here. And soon I'm going to be all alone in the house. I hate being left alone. Ever since I was a little girl I've hated being alone. Everyone knows that. Tina, you have to stay to dinner. Miss Shore, you must stay, too. It's so lonely here by the sea. What happens if someone breaks in? —Don't frown, there are plenty of bad people about. That's one thing that hasn't gotten better since independence."

"Of course I'm staying," replied Tina easily. "I've arranged it with Hazel." Jemima was wondering guiltily if she, too, ought to stay. But it was the night of her hotel's weekly party on the beach—barbecue followed by dancing to a steel band. Jemima, who loved to dance in the Northern Hemisphere, was longing to try it here. Dancing under

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the stars by the sea sounded idyllic. Did Miss Izzy really need extra company? Her eyes met those of Tina Archer across the old lady's strawhatted head. Tina shook her head slightly.

After a sip of the famous rum punch—whatever the secret ingredient, it was the strongest she had yet tasted on the island—Jemima was able to make her escape. In any case, the punch was having a manifestly relaxing effect on Miss Izzy herself. She became rapidly quite tipsy and Jemima wondered how long she would actually stay awake. The next time they met must be in the freshness of a morning.

Jemima drove away just as the enormous red sun was rushing down below the horizon. The beat of the waves from the shore pursued her. Archer Plantation House was set in a lonely position on its own spit of land at the end of its own long avenue. She could hardly blame Miss Izzy for not wanting to be abandoned there. Jemima listened to the sound of the waves until the very different noise of the steel band in the next village along the shore took over. That transferred her thoughts temporarily from recent events at Archer Plantation House to the prospect of her evening ahead. One way or another, for a brief space of time, she would stop thinking altogether about Miss Isabella Archer.

That was because the beach party was at first exactly what Jemima had expected—relaxed, good-natured, and noisy. She found her cares gradually floating away as she danced and danced again with a series of partners, English, American, and Bo'lander, to the beat of the steel band. That rum punch of Miss Izzy's, with its secret ingredient, must have been lethal because its effects seemed to stay with her for hours. She decided she didn't even need the generous profferings of the hotel mixture—a good deal weaker than Miss Izzy's beneath its lavish surface scattering of nutmeg. Others, however, decided that the hotel punch was exactly what they did need. All in all, it was already a very good party long before the sliver of the new moon became visible over the now-black waters of the Caribbean. Jemima, temporarily alone, tilted back her head as she stood by the lapping waves at the edge of the beach and fixed the moon in her sights.

"You going to wish on that new little moon?" She turned. A tall man—at least a head taller than she was—was standing beside her on the sand. She had not heard him, the gentle noise of the waves masking his approach. For a moment she didn't recognize Joseph

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Archer in his loose flowered shirt and long white trousers, so different did he look from the fisherman encountered that noon at the graveside.

In this way it came about that the second part of the beach party was quite unexpected, at least from Jemima's point of view.

"I ought to wish. I ought to wish to make a good program, I suppose. That would be a good, professional thing to do."

"Miss Izzy Archer and all that?"

"Miss Izzy, Archer Plantation House, Bow Island—to say nothing of the Archer Tomb, old Sir Valentine, and all that." She decided not to mention Tina Archer and all that for the time being.

"All that!" He sighed. "Listen, Jemima—it's good, this band. We're saying it's about the best on the island these days. Let's be dancing, shall we? Then you and me can talk about all that in the morning. In my office, you know."

It was the distinct authority with which Joseph Archer spoke quite as much as the mention of his office which intrigued Jemima. Before she lost herself still further in the rhythm of the dance—which she had a feeling that with Joseph Archer to help her she was about to do—she must find out just what he meant. And, for that matter, just who he was.

The second question was easily answered. It also provided the answer to the first. Joseph Archer might or might not go fishing from time to time when he was off-duty, but he was also a member of the newly formed Bo'lander government. Quite an important one, in fact. Important in the eyes of the world in general, and particularly important in the eyes of Jemima Shore, Investigator. For Joseph Archer was the minister dealing with tourism, his brief extending to such matters as conservation, the Bo'lander historic heritage, and—as he described it to her—"the future National Archer Plantation House Museum."

Once again it didn't seem the appropriate moment to mention Tina Archer and her possible future ownership of the plantation house. As Joseph himself had said, the morning would do for all that. In his office in Bowtown.

They danced on for a while, and it was as Jemima had suspected it would be: something to lose herself in, perhaps dangerously so. The tune to "This is my island in the sun" was played and Jemima never once heard the graveyard words in her imagination. Then Joseph Archer, most politely and apparently regretfully, said he had to leave. He had an extremely early appointment—and not with a

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fish, either, he added with a smile. Jemima felt a pang which she hoped didn't show. But there was plenty of time, wasn't there? There would be other nights and other parties, other nights on the beach as the moon waxed to full in the two weeks she had before she must return to England.

Jemima's personal party stopped, but the rest of the celebration went on late into the night, spilling onto the sands, even into the sea, long after the sliver of the moon had vanished. Jemima, sleeping fitfully and visited by dreams in which Joseph Archer, Tina, and Miss Izzy executed some kind of elaborate dance, not at all like the kind of island jump-up she had recently been enjoying, heard the noise in the distance.

Far away on Archer Plantation's lonely peninsula, the peace was broken not by a steel band but by the rough sound of the waves bashing against the rocks at its farthest point. A stranger might have been surprised to see that the lights were still on in the great drawing room, the shutters having been drawn back once the sun was gone, but nobody born on Bow Island—a fisherman out to sea, for example—would have found it at all odd. Everyone knew that Miss Izzy Archer was frightened of the dark and liked to go to bed with all her lights blazing. Especially when Hazel had gone to her sister's wedding and Henry had taken her there—another fact of island life which most Bo'landers would have known.

In her room overlooking the sea, tossing in the big four-poster bed in which she had been born over eighty years ago, Miss Izzy, like Jemima Shore, slept fitfully. After a while, she got out of bed and went to one of the long windows. Jemima would have found her nightclothes, like her swimming costume, bizarre, for Miss Izzy wasn't wearing the kind of formal Victorian nightdress which might have gone with the house. Rather, she was "using up," as she quaintly put it, her father's ancient burgundy-silk pajamas, purchased many eons ago in Jermyn Street. And as the last Sir John Archer, Baronet, had been several feet taller than his plump little daughter, the long trouser legs trailed on the floor behind her.

Miss Izzy continued to stare out of the window. Her gaze followed the direction of the terrace, which led in a series of parterres, once grandly planted, now overgrown, down to the rocks and the sea. Although the waters themselves were mostly blackness, the Caribbean night was not entirely dark. Besides, the light from the draw-

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ing-room windows streamed out onto the nearest terrace. Miss Izzy rubbed her eyes, then she turned back into the bedroom, where the celebrated oil painting of Sir Valentine hung over the mantelpiece dominated the room. Rather confusedly—she must have drunk far too much of that punch—she decided that her ancestor was trying to encourage her to be valiant in the face of danger for the first time in her life. She, little Isabella Archer, spoilt and petted Izzy, his last legitimate descendant—no, not his last legitimate descendant, but the habits of a lifetime were difficult to break—was being spurred on to something courageous by the hawklike gaze of the fierce old autocrat.

But I'm so old, thought Miss Izzy. Then: But not *too* old. Once you let people know you're not, after all, a coward—

She looked out of the window once more. The effects of the punch were wearing off. Now she was quite certain of what she was seeing. Something dark, darkly clad, dark-skinned— What did it matter, someone dark had come out of the sea and was now proceeding silently in the direction of the house.

I must be brave, thought Miss Izzy. She said aloud: "Then he'll be proud of me. His brave girl." Whose brave girl? No, not Sir Valentine's—Daddy's brave girl. Her thoughts began to float away again into the past. I wonder if Daddy will take me on a swim with him to celebrate?

Miss Izzy started to go downstairs. She had just reached the door of the drawing room and was standing looking into the decaying red-velvet interior, still brightly illuminated, at the moment when the black-clad intruder stepped into the room through the open window.

Even before the intruder began to move softly toward her, dark-gloved hands outstretched, Miss Izzy Archer knew without doubt in her rapidly beating old heart that Archer Plantation, the house in which she had been born, was also the house in which she was about to die.

"Miss Izzy Archer is dead. Some person went and killed her last night. A robber, maybe." It was Joseph Archer who broke the news to Jemima the next morning.

He spoke across the broad desk of his formal office in Bowtown. His voice was hollow and distant, only the Bo'lander sing-song to connect him with Jemima's handsome dancing partner of the night before. In his short-sleeved but official-looking white shirt and dark

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trousers, he looked once again completely different from the cheerful ragged fisherman Jemima had first encountered. This was indeed the rising young Bo'lander politician she was seeing: a member of the newly formed government of Bow Island. Even the tragic fact of the death—the murder, as it seemed—of an old lady seemed to strike no chord of emotion in him.

Then Jemima looked again and saw what looked suspiciously like tears in Joseph Archer's eyes.

"I just heard myself, you know. The Chief of Police, Sandy Marlow, is my cousin." He didn't attempt to brush away the tears. If that was what they were. But the words were presumably meant as an explanation. Of what? Of shock? Grief? Shock he must surely have experienced, but grief? Jemima decided at this point that she could at least inquire delicately about his precise relationship to Miss Izzy.

It came back to her that he had visited the old lady the week previously, if Miss Izzy's rather vague words concerning "Little Joseph" were to be trusted. She was thinking not so much of a possible blood relationship as some other kind of connection. After all, Joseph Archer himself had dismissed the former idea in the graveyard. His words about Sir Valentine and his numerous progeny came back to her: "Don't pay too much attention to the stories. Otherwise, how come we're not all living in that fine old Archer Plantation House?" At which Greg Harrison had commented with such fury: "Instead of merely my ex-wife." The exchange made more sense to her now, of course, that she knew of the position of Tina Harrison, now Tina Archer, in Miss Izzy's will.

The will! Tina would now inherit! And she would inherit in the light of a will signed the very morning of the day of Miss Izzy's death. Clearly, Joseph had been correct when he dismissed the claim of the many Bo'landers called Archer to be descended in any meaningful fashion from Sir Valentine. There was already a considerable difference between Tina, the allegedly sole legitimate descendant other than Miss Izzy, and the rest of the Bo'lander Archers. In the future, with Tina come into her inheritance, the gap would widen even more.

It was extremely hot in Joseph's office. It was not so much that Bow Island was an unsophisticated place as that the persistent breeze made air-conditioning generally unnecessary. The North American tourists who were beginning to request air-conditioning in the hotels, reflected Jemima, would only succeed in ruining the most perfect kind of natural ventilation. But a government office in

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Bowtown was rather different. A huge fan in the ceiling made the papers on Joseph's desk stir uneasily. Jemima felt a ribbon of sweat trickle down beneath her long loose white T-shirt, which she had belted as a dress to provide some kind of formal attire to call on a Bo'lander minister in working hours.

By this time, Jemima's disbelieving numbness on the subject of Miss Izzy's murder was wearing off. She was struck by the frightful poignancy of that last encounter in the decaying grandeur of Archer Plantation House. Worse still, the old lady's pathetic fear of loneliness was beginning to haunt her. Miss Izzy had been so passionate in her determination not to be abandoned. "Ever since I was a little girl I've hated being alone. Everyone knows that. It's so lonely here by the sea. What happens if someone breaks in?"

Well, someone had broken in. Or so it was presumed. Joseph Archer's words: "A robber, maybe." And this robber—maybe—had killed the old lady in the process.

Jemima began hesitantly: "I'm so sorry, Joseph. What a ghastly tragedy! You knew her? Well, I suppose everyone round here must have known her—"

"All the days of my life, since I was a little boy. My mama was one of her maids. Just a little thing herself, and then she died. She's in that churchyard, you know, in a corner. Miss Izzy was very good to me when my mama died, oh, yes. She was kind. Now you'd think that independence, *our* independence, would be hard for an old lady like her, but Miss Izzy she just liked it very much. 'England's no good to me any more, Joseph,' she said, 'I'm a Bo'lander just like the rest of you.' "

"You saw her last week, I believe. Miss Izzy told me that herself."

Joseph gazed at Jemima steadily—the emotion had vanished. "I went to talk with her, yes. She had some foolish idea of changing her mind about things. Just a fancy, you know. But that's over. May she rest in peace, little old Miss Izzy. We'll have our National Museum now, that's for sure, and we'll remember her with it. It'll make a good museum for our history. Didn't they tell you in London, Jemima?" There was pride in his voice as he concluded: "Miss Izzy left everything in her will to the people of Bow Island."

Jemima swallowed hard. Was it true? Or rather, was it still true? Had Miss Izzy really signed a new will yesterday? She had been quite circumstantial on the subject, mentioning someone called Thompson—her lawyer, no doubt—who thought there would be

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"trouble" as a result. "Joseph," she said, "Tina Archer was up at Archer Plantation House yesterday afternoon, too."

"Oh, that girl, the trouble she made, tried to make. Tina and her stories and her fine education and her history. And she so pretty!" Joseph's tone was momentarily violent but he finished more calmly. "The police are waiting at the hospital. She's not speaking yet, she's not even conscious." Then even more calmly: "She's not so pretty now, I hear. That robber beat her, you see."

It was hotter than ever in the Bowtown office and even the papers on the desk were hardly stirring in the waft of the fan. Jemima saw Joseph's face swimming before her. She absolutely must not faint—she never fainted. She concentrated desperately on what Joseph Archer was telling her, the picture he was recreating of the night of the murder. The shock of learning that Tina Archer had also been present in the house when Miss Izzy was killed was irrational, she realized that. Hadn't Tina promised the old lady she would stay with her?

Joseph was telling her that Miss Izzy's body had been found in the drawing room by the cook, Hazel, returning from her sister's wedding at first light. It was a grisly touch that because Miss Izzy was wearing red-silk pajamas—her daddy's—and all the furnishings of the drawing room were dark-red as well, poor Hazel had not at first realized the extent of her mistress's injuries. Not only was there blood everywhere, there was water, too—pools of it. Whatever—whoever—had killed Miss Izzy had come out of the sea. Wearing rubber shoes—or flippers—and probably gloves as well.

A moment later, Hazel was in no doubt about what had hit Miss Izzy. The club, still stained with blood, had been left lying on the floor of the front hall. (She herself, deposited by Henry, had originally entered by the kitchen door.) The club, although not of Bo'lander manufacture, belonged to the house. It was a relic, African probably, of Sir John Archer's travels in other parts of the former British Empire, and hung heavy and short-handled on the drawing-room wall. Possibly Sir John had in mind to wield it against unlawful intruders but to Miss Izzy it had been simply one more family memento. She never touched it. Now it had killed her.

"No prints anywhere," Joseph said. "So far."

"And Tina?" asked Jemima with dry lips. The idea of the pools of water stagnant on the floor of the drawing room mingled with Miss Izzy's blood reminded her only too vividly of the old lady when last

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seen—soaking wet in her bizarre swimming costume, defiantly sitting down on her own sofa.

"The robber ransacked the house. Even the cellar. The champagne cases Miss Izzy boasted about must have been too heavy, though. He drank some rum. The police don't know yet what he took—silver snuff-boxes maybe, there were plenty of those about." Joseph sighed. "Then he went upstairs."

"And found Tina?"

"In one of the bedrooms. He didn't hit her with the same weapon—lucky for her, as he'd have killed her just like he killed Miss Izzy. He left that downstairs and picked up something a good deal lighter. Probably didn't reckon on seeing her or anyone there at all. 'Cept for Miss Izzy, that is. Tina must have surprised him. Maybe she woke up. Robbers—well, all I can say is that robbers here don't generally go and kill people unless they're frightened."

Without warning, Joseph slumped down in front of her and put his head in his hands. He murmured something like: "When we find who did it to Miss Izzy—"

It wasn't until the next day that Tina Archer was able to speak even haltingly to the police. Like most of the rest of the Bow Island population, Jemima Shore was informed of the fact almost immediately. Claudette, manageress of her hotel, a sympathetic if loquacious character, just happened to have a niece who was a nurse. But that was the way information always spread about the island–no need for newspapers or radio, this private telegraph was far more efficient.

Jemima had spent the intervening twenty-four hours swimming rather aimlessly, sunbathing, and making little tours of the island in her mini. She was wondering at what point she should inform Megalith Television of the brutal way in which her projected program had been terminated and make arrangements to return to London. After a bit, the investigative instinct, that inveterate curiosity which would not be stilled, came to the fore. She found she was speculating all the time about Miss Izzy's death. A robber? A robber who had also tried to kill Tina Archer? Or a robber who had merely been surprised by her presence in the house? What connection, if any, had all this with Miss Izzy's will?

The will again. But that was one thing Jemima didn't have to speculate about for very long. For Claudette, the manageress, also just happened to be married to the brother of Hazel, Miss Izzy's cook.

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In this way, Jemima was apprised—along with the rest of Bow Island, no doubt—that Miss Izzy had indeed signed a new will down in Bowtown on the morning of her death, that Eddie Thompson, the solicitor, had begged her not to do it, that Miss Izzy *had* done it, that Miss Izzy had still looked after Hazel all right, as she had promised (and Henry who had worked for her even longer), and that some jewelry would go to a cousin in England, "seeing as Miss Izzy's mother's jewels were in an English bank anyway since long back." But for the rest, well, there would be no National Bo'lander Museum now, that was for sure. Everything else—that fine old Archer Plantation House, Miss Izzy's fortune, reputedly enormous but who knew for sure?—would go to Tina Archer.

If she recovered, of course. But the latest cautious bulletin from Claudette via the niece-who-was-a-nurse, confirmed by a few other loquacious people on the island, was that Tina Archer *was* recovering. The police had already been able to interview her. In a few days she would be able to leave the hospital. And she was determined to attend Miss Izzy's funeral, which would be held, naturally enough, in that little English-looking church with its incongruous tropical vegetation overlooking the sunny grave. For Miss Izzy had long ago made clear her own determination to be buried in the Archer Tomb, along with Governor Sir Valentine and "his only wife, Isabella."

"As the last of the Archers. But she still had to get permission since it's a national monument. And of course the government couldn't do enough for her. So they gave it. Then. Ironic, isn't it?" The speaker making absolutely no attempt to conceal her disgust was Coralie Harrison. "And now we learn that she wasn't the last of the Archers, not officially, and we shall have the so-called Miss Tina Archer as chief mourner. And while the Bo'lander government desperately looks for ways to get round the will and grab the house for their precious museum, nobody quite has the bad taste to go ahead and say no—no burial in the Archer Tomb for naughty old Miss Izzy. Since she hasn't, after all, left the people of Bow Island a penny."

"It should be an interesting occasion," Jemima murmured. She was sitting with Coralie Harrison under the conical thatched roof of the hotel's beach bar. This was where she first danced, then sat out with Joseph Archer on the night of the new moon—the night Miss Izzy had been killed. Now the sea sparkled under the sun as though there were crystals scattered on its surface. Today there were no waves at all and the happy water-skiers crossed and re-

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crossed the wide bay with its palm-fringed shore. Enormous brown pelicans perched on some stakes which indicated where rocks lay. Every now and then, one would take off like an unwieldy aeroplane and fly slowly and inquisitively over the heads of the swimmers. It was a tranquil, even an idyllic scene, but somewhere in the distant peninsula lay Archer Plantation House, not only shuttered but now, she imagined, also sealed by the police.

Coralie had sauntered up to the bar from the beach. She traversed the few yards with seeming casualness—all Bo'landers frequently exercised their right to promenade along the sands unchecked (as in most Caribbean islands, no one owned any portion of the beach in Bow Island, even outside the most stately mansion like Archer Plantation House, except the people). Jemima, however, was in no doubt that this was a planned visit. She had not forgotten that first meeting, and Coralie's tentative approach to her, interrupted by Greg's peremptory cry.

It was the day after the inquest on Miss Izzy's death. Her body had been released by the police and the funeral would soon follow. Jemima admitted to herself that she was interested enough in the whole Archer family, and its various branches, to want to attend it, quite apart from the tenderness she felt for the old lady herself, based on that brief meeting. To Megalith Television, in a telex from Bowtown, she had spoken merely of tying up a few loose ends resulting from the cancellation of her program.

There had been an open verdict at the inquest. Tina Archer's evidence in a sworn statement had not really contributed much that wasn't known or suspected already. She had been asleep upstairs in one of the many fairly derelict bedrooms kept ostensibly ready for guests. The bedroom chosen for her by Miss Izzy had not faced onto the sea. The chintz curtains in this back room, bearing some dated rosy pattern from a remote era, weren't quite so bleached and tattered since they had been protected from the sun and salt.

Miss Izzy had gone to bed in good spirits, reassured by the fact that Tina Archer was going to spend the night. She had drunk several more rum punches and had offered to have Henry fetch some of her father's celebrated champagne from the cellar. As a matter of fact, Miss Izzy often made this offer after a few draughts of punch, but Tina reminded her that Henry was away and the subject was dropped.

In her statement, Tina said she had no clue as to what might have awakened the old lady and induced her to descend the stairs—it was

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right out of character in her own opinion. Isabella Archer was a lady of independent mind but notoriously frightened of the dark, hence Tina's presence at the house in the first place. As to her own recollection of the attack, Tina had so far managed to dredge very few of the details from her memory—the blow to the back of the head had temporarily or permanently expunged all the immediate circumstances from her consciousness. She had a vague idea that there had been a bright light, but even that was rather confused and might be part of the blow she had suffered. Basically, she could remember nothing between going to bed in the tattered, rose-patterned four-poster and waking up in hospital.

Coralie's lip trembled. She bowed her head and sipped at her long drink through a straw—she and Jemima were drinking some exotic mixture of fruit juice, alcohol free, invented by Matthew, the barman. There was a wonderful soft breeze coming in from the sea and Coralie was dressed in a loose flowered cotton dress, but she looked hot and angry. "Tina schemed for everything all her life and now she's got it. That's what I wanted to warn you about that morning in the churchyard—don't trust Tina Archer, I wanted to say. Now it's too late, she's got it all. When she was married to Greg, I tried to like her, Jemima, honestly I did. Little Tina, so cute and so clever, but always trouble—"

"Joseph Archer feels rather the same way about her, I gather," Jemima said. Was it her imagination or did Coralie's face soften slightly at the sound of Joseph's name?

"Does he? I'm glad. He fancied her, too, once upon a time. She is quite pretty." Their eyes met. "Well, not all that pretty, but if you like the type—" Jemima and Coralie both laughed. The fact was that Coralie Harrison was quite appealing, if you liked *her* type, but Tina Archer was ravishing by any standards.

"Greg absolutely loathes her now, of course," Coralie continued firmly, "especially since he heard the news about the will. When we met you that morning up at the church he'd just been told. Hence, well, I'm sorry, but he was very rude, wasn't he?"

"More hostile than rude." But Jemima had begun to work out the timing. "You mean your brother knew about the will *before* Miss Izzy was killed?" she exclaimed.

"Oh, yes. Someone from Eddie Thompson's office told Greg—Daisy Marlow, maybe, he takes her out. Of course, we all knew it was on the cards, except we hoped Joseph had argued Miss Izzy out of it.

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And he *would* have argued her out of it given time. That museum is everything to Joseph."

"Your brother and Miss Izzy—that wasn't an easy relationship, I gather."

Jemima thought she was using her gentlest and most persuasive interviewer's voice, but Coralie countered with something like defiance: "You sound like the police!"

"Why, have they—?"

"Well, of course they have!" Coralie answered the question before Jemima had completed it. "Everyone knows that Greg absolutely hated Miss Izzy—blamed her for breaking up his marriage, for taking little Tina and giving her ideas!"

"Wasn't it rather the other way around—Tina delving into the family records for the museum and then my program? You *said* she was a schemer."

"Oh, I *know* she was a schemer! But did Greg? He did not. Not then. He was besotted with her at the time, so he had to blame the old lady. They had a frightful row—very publicly. He went round to the house one night, went in by the sea, shouted at her. Hazel and Henry heard, so then everyone knew. That was when Tina told him she was going to get a divorce and throw in her lot with Miss Izzy for the future. I'm afraid my brother is rather an extreme person—his temper is certainly extreme. He made threats—"

"But the police don't think—" Jemima stopped. It was clear what she meant.

Coralie swung her legs off the bar stool. Jemima handed her the huge straw bag with the archer logo on it and she slung it over her shoulder in proper Bo'lander fashion.

"How pretty," Jemima commented politely.

"I sell them at the hotel on the North Point. For a living." The remark sounded pointed. "No," Coralie went on rapidly before Jemima could say anything more on that subject, "of course the police don't *think,* as you put it. Greg might have assaulted Tina—but Greg kill Miss Izzy when he knew perfectly well that by so doing he was handing his ex-wife a fortune? No way. Not even the Bo'lander police would believe that."

That night Jemima Shore found Joseph Archer again on the beach under the stars. But the moon had waxed since their first encounter. Now it was beginning to cast a silver pathway on the waters of the night. Nor was this meeting unplanned as that first one had been.

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Joseph had sent her a message that he would be free and they had agreed to meet down by the bar.

"What do you say I'll take you on a night drive round our island, Jemima?"

"No. Let's be proper Bo'landers and walk along the sands." Jemima wanted to be alone with him, not driving past the rows of lighted tourist hotels, listening to the eternal beat of the steel bands. She felt reckless enough not to care how Joseph himself would interpret this change of plan.

They walked for some time along the edge of the sea, in silence except for the gentle lap of the waves. After a while, Jemima took off her sandals and splashed through the warm receding waters, and a little while after that Joseph took her hand and led her back onto the sand. The waves grew conspicuously rougher as they rounded the point of the first wide bay. They stood for a moment together, Joseph and Jemima, he with his arm companionably round her waist.

"Jemima, even without that new moon, I'm going to wish—" Then Joseph stiffened. He dropped the encircling arm, grabbed her shoulder, and swung her around. "Jesus, oh sweet Jesus, do you see that?"

The force of his gesture made Jemima wince. For a moment she was distracted by the flickering moonlit swathe on the dark surface of the water. There were multitudinous white—silver—horses out beyond the land where high waves were breaking over an outcrop of rocks. She thought Joseph was pointing out to sea. Then she saw the lights.

"The Archer house!" she cried. "I thought it was shut up!" It seemed that all the lights of the house were streaming out across the promontory on which it lay. Such was the illumination that you might have supposed some great ball was in progress, a thousand candles lit as in the days of Governor Archer. More somberly, Jemima realized that was how the plantation house must have looked on the night of Miss Izzy's death. Tina Archer and others had borne witness to the old lady's insistence on never leaving her house in darkness. The night her murderer had come in from the sea, this is how the house must have looked to him.

"Come on!" said Joseph. The moment of lightness—or loving, perhaps?—had utterly vanished. He sounded both grim and determined.

"To the police?"

"No, to the house. I need to know what's happening there."

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As they half ran along the sands, Joseph said, "This house should have been *ours*."

Ours: the people of Bow Island.

His restlessness on the subject of the museum struck Jemima anew since her conversation with Coralie Harrison. What would a man—or a woman, for that matter—do for an inheritance? And there was more than one kind of inheritance. Wasn't a national heritage as important to some people as a personal inheritance to others? Joseph Archer was above all a patriotic Bo'lander. And he had not known of the change of will on the morning after Miss Izzy's death. She herself had evidence of that. Might a man like Joseph Archer, a man who had already risen in his own world by sheer determination, decide to take the law into his own hands in order to secure the museum for his people while there was still time?

But to kill the old lady who had befriended him as a boy? Batter her to death? As he strode along, so tall in the moonlight, Joseph was suddenly a complete and thus menacing enigma to Jemima.

They had reached the promontory, had scrambled up the rocks, and had got as far as the first terrace when all the lights in the house went out. It was as though a switch had been thrown. Only the cold eerie glow of the moon over the sea behind them remained to illuminate the bushes, now wildly overgrown, and the sagging balustrades.

But Joseph strode on, helping Jemima up the flights of stone steps, some of them deeply cracked and uneven. In the darkness, Jemima could just see that the windows of the drawing room were still open. There had to be someone in there behind the ragged red-brocade curtains which had been stained by Miss Izzy's blood.

Joseph, holding Jemima's hand, pulled her through the center window.

There was a short cry like a suppressed scream and then a low sound, as if someone was laughing at them there in the dark. An instant later, all the lights were snapped on at once.

Tina was standing at the door, her hand at the switch. She wore a white bandage on her head like a turban—and she wasn't laughing, she was sobbing.

"Oh, it's you, Jo-seph and Je-mi-ma Shore." For the first time, Jemima was aware of the sing-song Bo'lander note in Tina's voice. "I was so fright-ened."

"Are you all right, Tina?" asked Jemima hastily, to cover the fact

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that she had been quite severely frightened herself. The atmosphere of angry tension between the two other people in the room, so different in looks yet both of them, as it happened, called Archer, was almost palpable. She felt she was in honor bound to try to relieve it. "Are you all alone?"

"The police said I could come." Tina ignored the question. "They have finished with everything here. And besides—" her terrified sobs had vanished, there was something deliberately provocative about her as she moved toward them "—why ever not?" To neither of them did she need to elaborate. The words "since it's all mine" hung in the air.

Joseph spoke for the first time since they had entered the room. "I want to look at the house," he said harshly.

"Jo-seph Archer, you get out of here. Back where you came from, back to your off-ice and that's not a great fine house." Then she addressed Jemima placatingly, in something more like her usual sweet manner. "I'm sorry, but, you see, we've not been friends since way back. And, besides, you gave me such a shock."

Joseph swung on his heel. "I'll see you at the funeral, Miss Archer." He managed to make the words sound extraordinarily threatening.

That night it seemed to Jemima Shore that she hardly slept, although the threads of broken, half remembered dreams disturbed her and indicated that she must actually have fallen into some kind of doze in the hour before dawn. The light was still grey when she looked out of her shutters. The tops of the tall palms were bending—there was quite a wind.

Back on her bed, Jemima tried to recall just what she had been dreaming. There had been some pattern to it: she knew there had. She wished rather angrily that light would suddenly break through into her sleepy mind as the sun was shortly due to break through the eastern fringe of palms on the hotel estate. No gentle, slow-developing, rosy-fingered dawn for the Caribbean: one brilliant low ray was a herald of what was to come, and then, almost immediately, hot relentless sunshine for the rest of the day. She needed that kind of instant clarity herself.

Hostility. That was part of it all—the nature of hostility. The hostility, for example, between Joseph and Tina Archer the night before, so virulent and public—with herself as the public—that it might almost have been managed for effect.

Then the management of things: Tina Archer, always managing,

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always a schemer (as Coralie Harrison had said—and Joseph Archer, too). That brought her to the other couple in this odd, four-pointed drama: the Harrisons, brother and sister, or rather *half* brother and sister (a point made by Tina to correct Miss Izzy).

More hostility: Greg, who had once loved Tina and now loathed her. Joseph, who had once also perhaps loved Tina. Coralie, who had once perhaps—very much perhaps, this one—loved Joseph and certainly loathed Tina. Cute and clever little Tina, the Archer Tomb, the carved figures of Sir Valentine and his wife, the inscription. Jemima was beginning to float back into sleep, as the four figures, all Bo'landers, all sharing some kind of common past, began to dance to a calypso whose wording, too, was confused:

"This is your graveyard in the sun
Where my people have toiled since time begun—"

An extraordinarily loud noise on the corrugated metal roof above her head recalled her, trembling, to her senses. The racket had been quite immense, almost as if there had been an explosion or at least a missile fired at the chalet. The thought of a missile made her realize that it had in fact been a missile: it must have been a coconut which had fallen in such a startling fashion on the corrugated roof. Guests were officially warned by the hotel against sitting too close under the palm trees, whose innocuous-looking fronds could suddenly dispense their heavily lethal nuts. COCONUTS CAN CAUSE INJURY ran the printed notice.

That kind of blow on my head would certainly have caused injury, thought Jemima, if not death.

Injury, if not death. And the Archer Tomb: my only wife.

At that moment, straight on cue, the sun struck low through the bending fronds to the east and onto her shutters. And Jemima realized not only why it had been done but how it had been done. Who of them all had been responsible for consigning Miss Izzy Archer to the graveyard in the sun.

The scene by the Archer Tomb a few hours later had that same strange mixture of English tradition and Bo'lander exoticism which had intrigued Jemima on her first visit. Only this time she had a deeper, sadder purpose than sheer tourism. Traditional English hymns were sung at the service, but outside a steel band was playing at Miss Izzy's request. As one who had been born on the island, she had asked for a proper Bo'lander funeral.

The Bo'landers, attending in large numbers, were by and large

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dressed with that extreme formality—dark suits, white shirts, ties, dark dresses, dark straw hats, even white gloves—which Jemima had observed in churchgoers of a Sunday and in the Bo'lander children, all of them neatly uniformed on their way to school. No Bow Island T-shirts were to be seen, although many of the highly colored intricate and lavish wreaths were in the bow shape of the island's logo. The size of the crowd was undoubtedly a genuine mark of respect. Whatever the disappointments of the will to their government, to the Bo'landers Miss Izzy Archer had been part of their heritage.

Tina Archer wore a black scarf wound round her head which almost totally concealed her bandage. Joseph Archer, standing far apart from her and not looking in her direction, looked both elegant and formal in his office clothes, a respectable member of the government. The Harrisons stood together, Coralie with her head bowed. Greg's defiant aspect, head lifted proudly, was clearly intended to give the lie to any suggestions that he had not been on the best of terms with the woman whose body was now being lowered into the family tomb.

As the coffin—so small and thus so touching—vanished from view, there was a sigh from the mourners. They began to sing again: a hymn, but with the steel band gently echoing the tune in the background.

Jemima moved discreetly in the crowd and stood by the side of the tall man.

"You'll never be able to trust her," she said in a low voice. "She's managed you before, she'll manage you again. It'll be someone else who will be doing the dirty work next time. On you. You'll never be able to trust her, will you? Once a murderess, always a murderess. You may wish one day you'd finished her off."

The tall man looked down at her. Then he looked across at Tina Archer with one quick savagely doubting look. Tina Archer Harrison, his only wife.

"Why, you—" For a moment, Jemima thought Greg Harrison would actually strike her down there at the graveside, as he had struck down old Miss Izzy and—if only on pretense—struck down Tina herself.

"Greg darling." It was Coralie Harrison's pathetic, protesting murmur. "What are you saying to him?" she demanded of Jemima in a voice as low as Jemima's own. But the explanations—for Coralie

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and the rest of Bow Island—of the conspiracy of Tina Archer and Greg Harrison were only just beginning.

The rest was up to the police, who with their patient work of investigation would first amplify, then press, finally concluding the case. And in the course of the investigations, the conspirators would fall apart, this time for real. To the police fell the unpleasant duty of disentangling the new lies of Tina Archer, who now swore that her memory had just returned, that it had been Greg who had half killed her that night, that she had had absolutely nothing to do with it. And Greg Harrison denounced Tina in return, this time with genuine ferocity. "It was her plan, her plan all along. She managed everything. I should never have listened to her!"

Before she left Bow Island, Jemima went to say goodbye to Joseph Archer in his Bowtown office. There were many casualties of the Archer tragedy beyond Miss Izzy herself. Poor Coralie was one: she had been convinced that her brother, for all his notorious temper, would never batter down Miss Izzy to benefit his ex-wife. Like the rest of Bow Island, she was unaware of the deep plot by which Greg and Tina would publicly display their hostility, advertise their divorce, and all along plan to kill Miss Izzy once the new will was signed. Greg, ostentatiously hating his ex-wife, would not be suspected, and Tina, suffering such obvious injuries, could only arouse sympathy.

Another small casualty, much less important, was the romance which just might have developed between Joseph Archer and Jemima Shore. Now, in his steamingly hot office with its perpetually moving fan, they talked of quite other things than the new moon and new wishes.

"You must be happy you'll get your museum," said Jemima.

"But that's not at all the way I wanted it to happen," he replied. Then Joseph added: "But you know, Jemima, there has been justice done. And in her heart of hearts Miss Izzy did really want us to have this National Museum. I'd have talked her round to good sense again if she had lived."

"That's why they acted when they did. They didn't dare wait, given Miss Izzy's respect for you," suggested Jemima. She stopped, but her curiosity got the better of her. There was one thing she had to know before she left. "The Archer Tomb and all that. Tina being descended from Sir Valentine's lawful second marriage. Is that true?"

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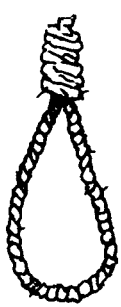
"Yes, it's true. Maybe. But it's not important to most of us here. You know something, Jemima? I, too, am descended from that well known second marriage. Maybe. And a few others maybe. Lucie Anne had two children, don't forget, and Bo'landers have large families. It was important to Tina Archer, not to me. That's not what I want. That's all past. Miss Izzy was the last of the Archers, so far as I'm concerned. Let her lie in her tomb."

"What *do* you want for yourself? Or for Bow Island, if you prefer."

Joseph smiled and there was a glimmer there of the handsome fisherman who had welcomed her to Bow Island, the cheerful dancing partner. "Come back to Bow Island one day, Jemima. Make another program about us, our history and all that, and I'll tell you then."

"I might just do that," said Jemima Shore.



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Only $48.00 for 15 Words or Less
$3.20 each additional word
Capitalized words add—40¢ per word
SAVE 15% WITH 3 CONSECUTIVE MONTHS SAME COPY ORDER

DEADLINE: Copy and payment must be in by the 5th day of the third preceding month for issue in which ad is to appear.

(PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE)

YOUR NAME _____

FIRM (NAME IN AD) _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ **STATE** _____ **ZIP** _____

PHONE: _____ **DATE:** _____

YOUR SIGNATURE _____

_____ Words at $3.20 each $ _____

_____ Capitalized word at 40¢ each
Total amount for 1 ad $ _____

15% Savings with 3 Consecutive Months Discount

(a) Multiply one ad total $_____ x 3 $ _____
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(Example One 15 word ad $48.00 x 3 months $144.00 x .85 $122.40)

$_____ is enclosed for _____ insertion(s) in the _____ issue(s) _____ Heading

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HOW TO COUNT WORDS: Name and address must be included in counting the number of Words in your ad. Each initial or number counts as 1 word. Mark Holly 380 Lexington Avenue New York New York 10017 7 WORDS. Zip codes are not counted. Phone # 2 Words. Symbols used as keys are charged for. City or State count as 1 word each. Garden City, New York 2 words. Abbreviations such as C.O.D. F.O.B. P.O. U.S.A. 7x10 35mm count as 1 word. (P.O. Box 145 count as 3 words). Webster's International Unabridged Dictionary will be used as our authority for spelling, compound words, hyphens, abbreviations, etc. **Please make checks payable to ELLERY QUEEN MAGAZINE.**

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"Q"

DETECTIVERSE

ALL CHOKED UP

by BETH van der VEEN

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Just give me a hug and a squeeze."
What Louise didn't know
Was how far he would go
Until she wheezed her very last wheeze.

LOVE, HONOR, BUT OBEY?

by BETH VAN DER VEEN

I loved my husband with all my heart,
But he was a meanie from the start.
I shot him just now
'Cause our wedding vow
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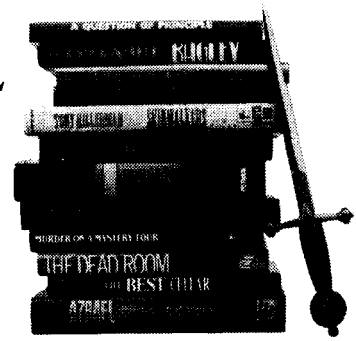

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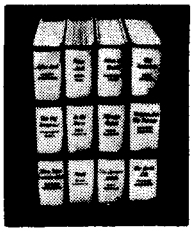

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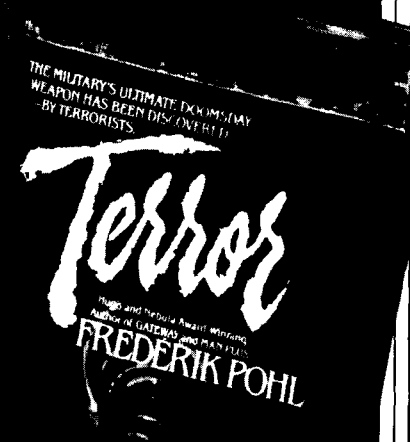

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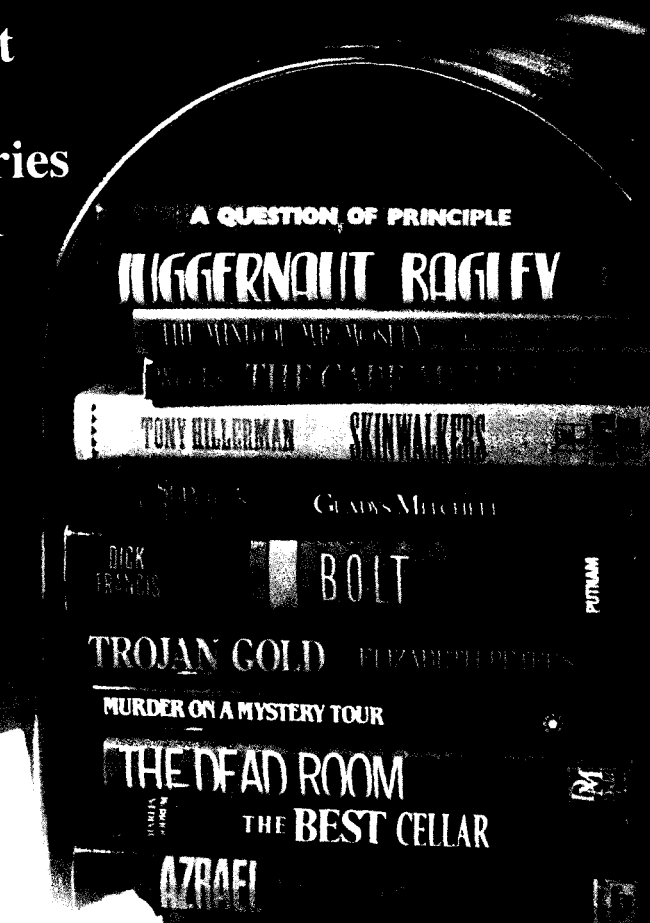

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